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39

THE HISTORY OF TAIN



COURT HOUSE TOWER

LEWIS TAYLOR



15/11/82

To,
W. R. Skinner Esq. & Co
From Robert Matheson Robert
P. H. & Co.
Glasgow.
Ross-shire N.
Christmas, 1882.



TAIN FROM THE EAST.

ROBERT B. HES

STORY OF THE

WILSON

A. WILSON, LAYMAN, D.D.

THE
WILSON

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RESEARCHES
INTO THE
HISTORY OF TAIN
EARLIER AND LATER

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM TAYLOR, M.A.
FORMERLY OF PULTENEYTOWN
AUTHOR OF "MEMORIALS OF DR C. C. MACKINTOSH OF TAIN AND DUNOON,"
"DIARY OF JAMES CALDER OF CROY," &C.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE substance of the first chapter of this little work, as well as some portions of the conclusion, formerly appeared in a smaller volume, after having been delivered as a lecture in the Court-House of Tain in the early spring of 1865. The second chapter contains the substance of a lecture delivered in the Town-Hall in the autumn of 1881, to an audience from which the lecturer missed, alas! many of "the old familiar faces," but which included many of a younger generation, who, he trusts, will prove themselves inheritors of the old local enthusiasm, and some of whom may yet confer signal benefits on their native town.

The writer has not thought it expedient to divest his essay of its original lecture-form, lest the local spirit that seemed to make the lectures interesting to the audiences who have requested their publication should evaporate in the process. But as the lectures

were at first prepared with anxious attention to correctness of statement, so now, in revising and re-arranging them for the press, their facts and conclusions have been scrupulously re-examined and verified, new facts have been here and there interwoven into the text, explanatory foot-notes have been supplied, and some longer notes, bearing on questions of especial importance or local interest, have been placed in an Appendix. References to authorities have also been added where this has seemed necessary. To refer, indeed, perpetually to works on general Scottish history, or to such books as "*Origines Parochiales*," or to the writer's own juvenile attempt in the "*New Statistical Account*," or to local records, has been thought needless. These and others have, however, been carefully examined. One or two of the books to which reference is made the writer has had no opportunity of consulting for himself. He has therefore to express his obligation to several friends, who have most obligingly taken the trouble of doing so in his behalf, and even of sending him long extracts for his own examination; as well as to several others—some of whom he names in the following pages—who have assisted him in his personal researches with a courtesy and kindness which he cannot forget.



RESEARCHES
INTO
THE HISTORY OF TAIN.

CHAPTER I.
THE EARLIER HISTORY.

IN compliance with the suggestion of one or two friends, I have undertaken to put together a few jottings on a subject which they have deemed likely to interest the people of Tain,—the old history of our parish and burgh. Seeing no reason why my fellow-townsmen should be ashamed of this local sentiment, I am not unwilling to show that I largely share in it. A feeling of special attachment to that spot of earth which is the place of our birth, the home of our childhood, the scene of our tenderest and most hallowed memories, is what no man surely need blush to own. It cannot

with justice be called an undignified or petty affection. If at times it may be found conjoined with what is undignified, when men of narrow minds or of very limited information exaggerate the importance of their own town and of its little community in comparison with every other place in the wide world, yet in itself it is neither a contemptible nor necessarily a narrow feeling. In kind, if not in largeness of object, it is the very same with that patriotism or love of country which most men would deem it an insult to be supposed to want; and it is just the man who loves his native town, who feels an intelligent interest in its history, and who is ready to do what in him lies to promote its welfare, that is most likely to show himself a true lover of his native land, and, should occasion call for it, to sacrifice his selfish interests for the public good. Even to this we may apply the maxim of our divine Lord, that "he who is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in much;" and we may safely aver that the man who is destitute of proper feelings towards his own little town, and who neglects his duty towards it, is not very likely to prove himself a sincere patriot, worthy to be intrusted with the larger interests of his country. I am not ashamed, therefore, to avow it as one of my principal objects in this lecture to foster in our minds—not a narrow, but—an intelligent affection for the place in which God has cast our lot; and for this purpose to

ask you to look back with me into the past, to see whether that will disclose anything more interesting regarding our town, than is to be seen by merely walking from day to day through the mud or dust of its streets. The extant memorials indeed of our local history are sadly few and fragmentary. It is only here and there that the cloud of oblivion, which conceals the centuries of the past, parts for a moment to allow some broken rays of light to struggle dimly through, enabling us to catch but occasional glimpses of the Tain of former days; but some of those glimpses are to my mind very suggestive, occasionally possessing an interest that, unless partiality misleads me, is more than local, and that makes it matter of regret that they are so few and so far between. Their scantiness and incompleteness, are such indeed as to provoke rather than gratify curiosity; yet there is enough to enable us without shame, perhaps even with some degree of pride, to avow ourselves citizens of the ancient and by no means undistinguished little burgh of Tain. Nor will these our inquiries into her past history be useless, if they excite a livelier interest in her future welfare; and if, prompting a warrantable ambition in her behalf, and a desire to see her exert an influence for good wherever her sons and daughters may go in after life, they stimulate persons of public spirit among us to devise means for promoting her material, intellectual, moral, and religious improvement.

Let me try, then, to piece together as I best can—or, if the fragmentary nature of the materials will hardly permit this, at least to string loosely together on an historical thread—such noticeable facts as I am acquainted with regarding our burgh and parish in the days of old. Beginning, as we must, in the dim morning twilight of Scottish history, our first data are necessarily mingled with speculation and conjecture. But this is incident to the commencement of all histories; and I can only promise, while picking, up even obscure references to this place wherever I can find them, to do my best to discriminate truth from fiction.

The town of Tain can be shown, with a considerable approach to historical certainty, to have existed now for a period of at least 800 years; and its first beginnings may have been a good deal earlier. It requires an effort both of reason and imagination to realize those days of old. We seem, when we endeavour to do so, to be peering into a world of shadows; instead of looking on our own very world, shone upon by our own sun, and peopled with living men and women of the same flesh and blood with ourselves. Nevertheless let us try to form a conception of the past. And to give vivacity to that conception, you will perhaps indulge me for a little, if I ask you to accompany me in fancy to those distant times, across the breadth of a millennium, for the purpose of con-

jecturing the probable appearance of the scene around us, ere our town began to be built. Suppose yourselves standing where you now are; but let imagination surround you with the circumstances of that ancient time by picturing the view as it would present itself if this house and all the buildings on every side of you were by some magician's wand swept wholly away, leaving you, under the sunshine of one of those ancient days, with luxuriant nature alone. What do you behold? Above you the ancient hill, for which we have now no distinctive name, but which our forefathers called Bengarrick, sloping gradually upwards as it still does, but then under its native covering of heather, whin, greensward, and wood, not yet disturbed by the farmer's plough or the woodman's axe. At your feet, looking downwards, you see that the gentle slope of the hill is not continued, as it possibly was in some old geologic era, to the very shore, but passes, by a sudden change, into a much steeper bank, that extends itself far eastwards and westwards, so as with long curved arms to embrace the lower plain of the Blar-leath, Links, and Fendom between it and the sea. This terrace-bank is not quite uniform: you can observe that on both sides of the place where you now stand, on your right hand and on your left, it has been deeply and widely cut in, grooved and scooped away by two winter burns, whose channels mark off this intermediate portion of the

bank into a separate bluff or promontory (if we may venture so to call it) formed to be the acropolis of the future burgh of Tain. The younger portion of my audience will hardly be able to conceive so well as the older, in whose youth fewer changes had taken place, what must have been the original sweetness and beauty of the spot, before these channels had been either bridged, levelled, built over, or in any way defaced by man; while tall forest-trees yet rose from their verdant sides; while the face also of the bank was as yet clothed with trees and shrubs, not only between the burns but beyond them, eastwards and westwards as far as the eye could reach, on to and past the lovely braes of the *Little Wood* on the one hand, and the lower braes that on the other overhung the shrubby ranges of the Blar-leath.

But now look seawards. Many here are old enough to have observed, and the venerable survivors of a still older generation are even better aware of the fact, that the plain on which our town looks down has suffered great changes within the memory of man. The tide which daily ebbs and flows upon our shores is annually washing away the sandy banks against which it beats, so that a considerable breadth of land ~~has~~ been entirely removed. This process has taken place, more or less rapidly, along the whole coast from the Morrich-mòr to the Plaids, and then on this side the river along the Links and the seaward banks of the

Blar-leath. Some here will distinctly remember when the Links in particular extended seawards many feet beyond their present line, and when a pretty high sandy hill, now no more, formed the eastern boundary of the Blar-leath. A number of small green islets were at low water seen within the water-mark, which have wholly disappeared. A process of wasting, or, as geologists call it, denudation, is beyond all question going on. By what cause this is produced I must not at present stop to speculate; but one thing is evident, that if it shall continue unchecked for a sufficiently long period of time, it must at length carry away the whole lands of the Blar-leath, Links, and Fendom, leaving to view at ebb-tide nothing but a wide reach of yellow sand, to be overflowed twice a-day by the blue sea, that will then beat at the base, perhaps high up the sides, of the long clayey bank on which we stand. So we are compelled to reason in looking forwards. But with the additional light of tradition we can reason with even greater certainty in the opposite direction—namely, that if the process of encroachment which we have witnessed from childhood, and which ~~our fathers~~ tell us they too have witnessed from *their* childhood, had already begun and was going on in the days of our grandfathers, of our great-grandfathers, and of still older generations, then the land must have once extended very far indeed beyond its present boundary out towards the middle of the Firth. It

is an interesting question, how far. On the supposition that the encroachment of the sea has been taking place for a thousand years, and on the additional supposition (which, however, I consider to be a more doubtful one) that during the whole of that period it has done so at the rapid rate which our older inhabitants tell us they have observed, then it becomes a matter of simple arithmetical calculation that at the date when this town was founded, the plain below must have extended a mile, two miles, or even farther, towards—perhaps quite on to—the river-channel of the Firth. I am informed that a similar process of encroachment has been going on also on the opposite coast of Sutherland. Now, there is a curious tradition still extant among natives of the Fendom (it would be worth while ascertaining whether it is likewise current about Dornoch) that long ago the Firth was so limited in breadth by the land on both sides, that at one place—was it at the Gizzen Briggs?—it could be, and sometimes actually was, bridged at low water by a plank thrown across; or, according to a more picturesque form of the same tradition, that a man, mounting into the branches of an overhanging tree on the Ross-shire bank, was able to hand over a parcel, tied to the end of a long stick, to a person who had waded out from the opposite shore to receive it. Without committing ourselves to the implicit belief of this tradition, the very fact of its existence is re-

markable ; and I, for one, with the wondrous facts and deductions of geology before me, am by no means disposed to dismiss it as an utter incredibility. Even on the supposition that it originated in the imagination of some inhabitant of the Fendom, who was shrewd enough to speculate on the phenomena which he witnessed, and whose guess was, in the course of transmission from mouth to mouth, invested with the form of a testimony from previous generations ; yet the circumstance that the inference or guess was thus accepted by the neighbourhood as a fact proves at the very least that it was fact-like, and that in those olden days the Firth must have been sufficiently narrow, and the process of encroachment sufficiently evident to the eyes of men, to make the idea a natural one that it had once been a mere river that could be spanned by a bridge or tree—so natural that when it had suggested itself to an ingenious mind, it was easily received into the belief of plain unspeculative men.

The extensive plain which thus stretched out far seawards, as well as eastwards and westwards, was, I think, also greener, more fertile, and better wooded than it is now. Within the memory of even recent tradition, confirmed by legal documents, there were cultivated farms and pasture-lands in the neighbourhood of the dreary Morrich-mòr, which have been since in part swept away by the sea, and in part overblown by the drifting sand (tradition says in a single

night), and converted into that dismal reach of barren downs on which no eye loves to dwell. Where the tide is now advancing over treeless farms, the stems of some great oaks have within the memory of many of us been exposed and disinterred. This fact, indeed, might be explained without supposing them to have grown upon the spot; but I have been assured on respectable authority that, even so late as the days of our great-grandfathers, one of these oaks was still rooted in the deep soil below the sand, and sprouted and bore leaves from year to year above the flowing tide that washed its trunk; so that there is some reason to think that the now monotonous plain was in old ancestral days covered by a noble forest.

Thus, on the whole, there is little difficulty in conceiving that both the site of the town and the immediately surrounding neighbourhood were pleasant and attractive. Even still, though our old trees have fallen everywhere around us by the feller's axe; and though the sea has robbed us of many an acre that once stretched in greenness along the shore; and though the hand of cultivation, not always controlled by good taste, has despoiled our wooded braes of their crown of beauty; and though the sea-sand, following hard upon the steps of man, has converted most of the low plain into an arid waste;—even still, the blue Firth, with the noble background of the hills of Sutherland, is beautiful exceedingly; and the site of

our town itself, looking up to it from the plain below, is picturesquely sweet. At that time I do not wonder that it attracted the comer's eye, nor that he pitched on this particular spot—this terrace-brow between the wooded burns—to be the site of a strong castle of defence, or of a central court of law, or of a conspicuous church, whichever it may have suited his purpose first to build.

But by whom was our town founded ? The oldest race that within historic times has been settled in Scotland was the Celtic, of whom there were at least three separate families, speaking kindred but not identical languages—namely, the Kymric or Welsh, who, in Scotland, chiefly occupied Clydesdale and the south-west ; the Pictish, who inhabited the fertile districts along the east coast, including Easter Ross ; and the Gaelic, who, originally immigrating from Ireland, had spread themselves over the Western Islands and the Highlands strictly so called, and pouring down upon these eastern plains, where the more civilised and less martial Picts lived quietly employed in the tillage of their little farms, carried on against them a constant war of plunder, dispossession, and extermination. But Picts and Gaels alike were, from an early date, exposed to the assaults of a common foe, not braver, but sturdier and more persevering than either. These were invaders from beyond the German Ocean, men of the Gothic or Teutonic

race, chiefly Saxons from Germany and Norsemen from Scandinavia. It was principally the latter who invaded this North of Scotland, and with whom, therefore, we have now to do. From the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, if not even earlier, down sometimes even to the twelfth and thirteenth, these Norsemen used to come, all unexpectedly, in their ships or boats, and, landing on our shores, succeeded almost everywhere in overpowering the old Pictish inhabitants of the coast, either driving them back into the hills, or forcing them to yield up a share of their most fertile lands. Between their Norse and Gaelic spoilers, it fared ill with the quiet industrious Picts, who lost, not only their possessions, but their distinctive language and nationality. We need not suppose that they were altogether exterminated; doubtless their blood mingles largely in our veins; but they became blended with their more numerous or more energetic assailants, so as to cease to be a distinct people. The Gothic and Celtic races, long after the Picts and Pictish language had lost their separate existence, continued their struggle through several centuries, in some parts of Scotland one race prevailing, in other parts the other, until at length our land was separated into two portions speaking different languages—the Lowland Scotch and the Highland Gaelic. In some districts, however, of which Easter Ross is one, neither of the two races seems to have at any time completely

prevailed ; both lived, and mingled, and fought, and intermarried here : so that we have had two totally distinct languages among us from time immemorial,—the Celtic, in the successive forms of Pictish and of Gaelic ; and the Teutonic, in the successive forms of Norse—perhaps Saxon also—modified Scotch, and now English.

Now to which of all these races does Tain owe its origin ? We cannot learn much from the name Tain, or Thayne, the origin of which is very uncertain. It does not appear to be Gaelic : possibly then it may be Pictish. The opinion has indeed been advanced, but remains to be verified, that it is Norse—a corruption of *Thing* or *Ting*, the same word which we find appearing also in the first syllable of Dingwall, and which in the Norse language signifies a court of law. The name, as thus interpreted, would be very characteristic of the Gothic and Germanic races, who have ever been distinguished by their respect for law ; and who, wherever they settled, even in those rude and bloody times when the rights of their Celtic victims were very little regarded by them, invariably established courts of law for the dispensation of public justice among themselves ; to which courts they gave the name of Things or Tings. Such a court, originally marked off by a circle of standing stones, we may suppose them to have constituted on the conspicuous site of this very house where we are this evening

assembled: it would through Easter Ross be known as the Thing or Ting, and possibly by corruption might come to be called Tain. The establishment of such a Scandinavian court or Ting here may have taken place as early as the ninth century of our era, or about one thousand years ago.

But although the Norsemen may have been the first who constituted Tain as a seat of law, yet there is some reason to think that there had been a village or hamlet, if not on the same spot, yet in the immediate neighbourhood, at a still earlier time. There is an old tradition that the town was once situated in the Fendom. Perhaps we must not interpret this too strictly, but content ourselves with assuming that some part of the Fendom* was dotted pretty thickly over with small farm-houses, so as to form a village, before the town proper was founded on its present site. There is a circumstance that goes to confirm the tradition. Among a good many names of localities in this parish, as well as throughout Easter Ross, which are neither Gaelic, English, nor Norse, but probably Pictish, there is one in the Fendom, close by what was Invereathie, that is peculiarly significant and suggestive—Pit-hogarty. This you all know is not English, and many of you know is not Gaelic. But if *Pit* was, as is probable, the old Pictish equivalent of the modern Gaelic

* That part, I am inclined to think, on the Fendom side of our river, which was called Invereathie, most of which is now covered by the sea at every tide. This name suggests the idea that our "river" was once called Eathie (as a burn near Cromarty is to this day).

Baile,* and denoted a farm-house or farm-town ; Pit-hogarty, translated into the kindred though not identical Gaelic, means probably *Baile an t-sagairt*, Priest's-town, or perhaps, plurally, *Baile nan sagart* or *Baile-shagart*, Priests'-town ; that is, what we now call the manse and glebe, the minister's abode. This is indeed a slight indication, which those who are not accustomed to etymological and topographical investigations will hardly appreciate : still, so far as it goes, it is an indication, which, along with others drawn from the early history of Christianity in Scotland, leads us to the important conclusion that in the times of the Picts, while their language had not yet been absorbed into its sister Gaelic—that is, at least as early as the ninth or tenth centuries of the Christian era, before Romish corruption had quite overlaid the more primitive Culdee creed and worship—the light of Christianity already shone in Easter Ross ; and that, in the now

* *Pit*, one of the most characteristic words yet ascertained of the lost Pictish tongue, occurs in the names of several farms in Easter Ross. Those names are for the most part as unintelligible to Gaelic as to English ears ; but in using some of them the Gaelic people translate *pit* into *baile*, while they make no attempt either to translate or understand the rest of the word. The position of *pit*, always at the beginning and not at the end of such names, confirms, on grammatical grounds, the now received opinion as to the Celtic affinities of the language spoken by the Pictish race. There is no proof that that race called themselves Picts ; yet the curious fact that the Romans, Welsh, Anglo-Saxons, and Norsemen concurred in calling them Picti, Fichti, Pechts, Pehtar, Pets, &c., leads me to conjecture that there was in their language some very common and characteristic word, sounding so, which struck the ears of foreign invaders. I venture the further conjecture that it was the word *pit* or *piht*, the word so constantly used in the names of their residences, and that from it foreigners naturally called the people themselves *Pehtar*, that is, *Pit-men*.

comparatively desolate Fendom, there was in those days a resident priest or minister, and, of course, a Christian population to whom he ministered. I confess I like the thought thus suggested, that the Christian appeared along with the civil element from the first traceable beginning of our town's existence, even as it has since gone on with it hand in hand.

But of the particular history of Tain, or of Easter Ross, in or before that period, we have not only no record, but not even a local tradition. In truth, this district is rather singular in its destitution of such remains of that early time; more so than the Western Highlands, which have both their Ossianic traditions and their Christian Culdee literature; and more so than Caithness and the Orkneys, of which the general history has on one side at least been preserved in the Norse Sagas. This I am inclined to attribute not merely to the fact that Norseman, Pict, and Gael were during those dismal centuries contending here for life and death—for the same was true in those other districts also—but especially to the fact that in this neighbourhood no one of the races absolutely prevailed. Hence, I think, it came to pass that neither Pictish, Gaelic, nor Norse history or tradition proved strong enough to outlive, as in many other parts of Scotland one or other did outlive, that chaotic period of bloodshed and social revolution; and that it is only in the eleventh century that the history of

Tain can be said to commence, when the Norse domination in this quarter having come to an end, and the province of Moray and Ross, to which it belonged, having been conclusively annexed to the kingdom of Scotland, it received from King Malcolm Canmore its constitution as a free Scottish town.*

It is for us an interesting fact that the historical commencement of our town's existence thus coincides in time with what is considered one of the grand epochs of Scottish history—the origin of the modern kingdom of all Scotland through the union of the Highlands and Lowlands under one sovereign, the celebrated Malcolm; as that again was contemporaneous with one of the most important epochs in the history of England—the conquest of that country by the Norman William. And these coincidences are all the more interesting, that they seem not to be accidental, but to be connected by the closest ties of cause and effect. For it was, in the first place, the cruelty of the Norman conquerors of England that drove northwards multitudes of the Anglo-Saxon families to fill the southern counties of Scotland, introducing there a considerable amount of Saxon civilisation, and Saxonizing the previously Gaelic court; and it seems, in the next place, to have been in a great measure through the additional strength brought by those refugees to Malcolm, that he was

* See Appendix, Note I.

able, after the defeat and death of his rival, the famous Macbeth, to pursue his advantage by coming northwards with an army to this province (of which Macbeth, before his usurpation of the kingdom, had been hereditary *Maor-mor* or Earl), so as to put down all opposition within it, and definitely to add it to his dominions ; and then, finally, we can understand how it would be that when in the province, adopting various political expedients for establishing his authority, he among other acts granted a constitution of civil and commercial freedom to the town of Tain.

It is not difficult, I think, to conjecture some of his motives for this step. In those troubled times, towns like this could hardly grow up by the spontaneous development of trade without external protection and aid. In the unsettled state of society, not to speak of the hostility of races, the quiet trader was afraid to show any tokens of increasing wealth, was often afraid even to have any : for if he remained at home, he was exposed to the predatory raids of savage hordes ; or if he travelled about with his merchandise according to primitive custom, he was liable to be murdered or plundered by the way ; so that he would in many cases be fain to purchase personal safety, and exemption from robbery, by payment to the neighbouring chiefs of whatever portion of his gains they might, under the name of tolls or black-mail, choose to exact. This was an evil

state of things, not for the trader alone, but for all who wished to deal with him. It would therefore be a real boon to the whole country for many miles around that a stronger and impartial power should interpose to constitute a free town in a convenient locality. The King may have had special reasons for selecting Tain for this purpose. On Malcolm's side, fighting with him against Macbeth, had been the head of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in the north of Scotland, Munro of Foulis.* These Munroes seem, from their beginning, to have cultivated the closest connection with Tain and Easter Ross, rather than with Dingwall, which lay, indeed, geographically nearer to their residence, but which was under the influence of their feudal enemies; so that, down even to comparatively recent times, they continued to acquire additional land on every side round this town, until it came to lie nearly in the centre of their scattered estates; even as on the other hand Tain has been reciprocally influenced in the most important respects during the whole course of its history, by its connection with these Munroes. I think it, therefore, possible that the men of Easter Ross may have gone, under Munro's leadership, to battle in Malcolm's behalf against Macbeth; and that, by way of reward to them, as well as with

* See MS. Genealogical Account of the Munroes of Foulis, of which several copies exist in this neighbourhood.

a political object of his own, the victorious king granted a constitution of freedom to our town. He would thus confirm the authority of the local court ; would make the inhabitants, within a circuit or girth of several miles, free from feudal authority—from all authority, in fact, but that which sprang from the Crown, and would assure to them the liberty of buying and selling, wherever they pleased, on the sole condition of paying the usual taxes to the king, thereby conferring a benefit which was manifestly fitted to confirm the attachment of the people of Easter Ross to his cause, and to strengthen his power in the whole north. Being himself in the province, he not improbably visited the spot, saw the somewhat striking situation of the village, the Ting, and in all likelihood also the Church, which he found already here ; and both on that account, and because of its position on the coast, between the fertile plains of Easter Ross on the one hand, and the wild Highlands of Kincardine and Sutherland on the other, pitched upon it as suitable for his purpose.*

But there was another reason why Malcolm should take notice of this place. Tain has, from the earliest date to which we can trace its privileges, been not only an immunity and municipality, but what was called a *girth*. Now, that was a significant appellation in ancient days, indicating the possession of important

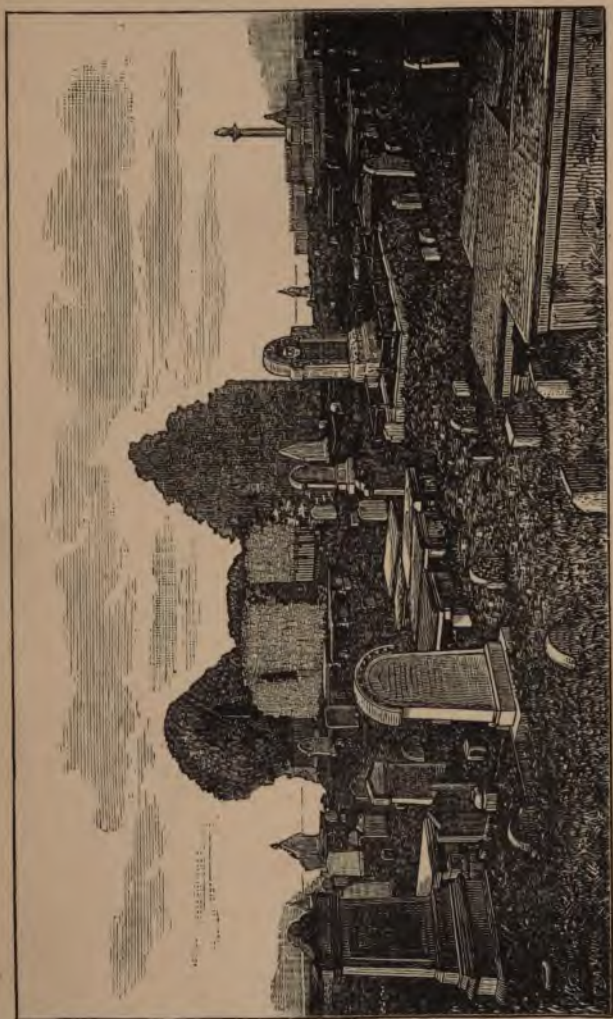
* See Appendix, Note II.

privileges based on religious motives. It meant a territory that, by favour of some particular saint, enjoyed the right of sanctuary; that is to say, a right claimed for it by the Church, and conceded to it by public opinion and practice, of receiving fugitives, and of protecting them, as long as they remained within the privileged bounds, from all violence, and even (unless in some excepted cases) from the arm of the law. Our burgh owed this distinction to its connection with a once very celebrated saint, who, there is reason to think, died a few years after the accession of Malcolm Canmore to the Scottish throne. I formerly used to receive without question, and indeed adopted in printed statements, the common opinion which placed his death nearly two centuries later, in the reign of Alexander III., although I was very sensible of the difficulty of reconciling that date with the earliest history of our town, which it rendered an inextricable puzzle; but now that, through a discovery made (strange to say) in Ireland, a holy and eminent Scottish man of the very same name has been ascertained to have died in Malcolm's reign, I am constrained, provisionally at least, to adopt the opinion of the Irish scholar to whom the discovery is due, that the two men are but one, and giving full weight to what I feel the almost irresistible historical reasons for rejecting altogether the previously received date, I conclude the earlier date to be the true one.*

* See Appendix, Note III.

It was, let me now therefore assume, about eight centuries and a half ago—that is, not far on either hand from the year of our Lord 1000—that there was to be seen, on a sandy hill below our town, where the ivy-clad ruins of the old chapel at present stand, a dwelling-house, in which was born a child who was destined in after years to become very famous. Duthach or Dubhthach was his name.* The legends say that his parents were of high rank and of great piety, so that they placed their son for instruction in divine things under the best masters they could find ; and that the boy showed such tokens of pre-eminent piety in early youth, that God even then wrought miracles in his behalf. The curious story is told, that when he had been sent on one occasion by his master to a smithy to obtain some fire, the smith took up a quantity of live coals with his tongs, and in Satanic mockery placed them in the lap of the pious boy ; who, meekly bearing the insult, carried home the burning fuel without injury to his clothes or to himself. So much for a specimen of the legends. But a comparison of the simpler biographical statements that accompany these Scottish legends with the plain facts recorded in

* The sound indicated by this cumbrous Gaelic orthography seems to have been uttered variously even by Gaelic tongues—Duvhach (Dufach), or Duhach (Du'ach) ; and by others has been corrupted into the strangely divergent forms of (in Latin) Duchasius and Duthacus, and, in English, of Duffy, Doffin, Duffus ; Ducho, Duchow ; Dutho, Duthow, Duthac, Duthus : the last of these (though a purely mistaken use of the possessive case Dutho's as a nominative) being now the commonest English, as Duffy is the present Irish, and Du'ach the present Gaelic pronunciation.



RUINS OF ST DUTHUS' CHAPEL.



Irish annals, makes it appear that in early life he crossed the channel to pursue his studies in Ireland. He was induced to do so, we must suppose, by the high reputation which that country for some previous centuries had borne for its religious light and learning under the comparatively scriptural system of Patrick, and which it still bore even so late as the eleventh century, ere that system had been buried under the mummeries of superstition, or the legends of the breviaries substituted for the Word of God in the education of its priests. He there acquainted himself with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and obtained such an accurate knowledge of their laws and precepts, and such a reputation for piety, that he subsequently became the chief confessor of Ireland and Scotland—not, I think, hearer of the confessions of men, but the chief confessor of Christ, perhaps the chief preacher of the Gospel, wherever the Gaelic language was spoken.* There is no trustworthy evidence to bear out the later attribution to him of the rank of Bishop of Ross ; neither need we credit the legends of his alleged miracles ; but he continued through life to bear the reputation of being “a very godly and learned man ;” and he finally rested from his labours at Armagh, on the 8th day of March, 1065. His last words, says a legendary narrative, which may here have caught up a true tradition, were these :—

* See Appendix, Note III.

Quæ est expectatio mea? nonne Dominus?—"What wait I for now, but for Thee, O Lord?" There is no distinct evidence to inform us whether Tain, his native place, was also the scene of his ordinary ministrations. This is not impossible. But it is also possible that he had no fixed residence; that his ministry was an itinerant one, extending over large portions of Gaelic Scotland and Ireland; so that, when he died, the only place which could show a special claim to possess his earthly remains was his native town of Tain. Hither, accordingly (when two centuries of superstition had gathered a halo of more questionable sanctity around his name), his remains were "translated" on the 19th day of June, in or about the year 1253. This date is given with such apparent precision, though by a comparatively late and legendary writer, that it may have been originally derived from authentic records: at all events there seems to be no reason to question its correctness; and it serves to explain how, by a very natural mistake, the recorded date of the saint's "translation," or second solemn burial, may have come to be regarded as the date nearly of his death, and so how his death came to be transposed from its proper place by two whole centuries. Thus, at least, we obtain a consistent narrative, and the mystery both of St Duthach's life and of our town's history is thoroughly explained.

It is to us a very interesting narrative. In the

first place, it brings out into the light of day the existence, character, and doings of a man with whose name we have been familiar from childhood, and yet of whom we knew so little that we could think of him but as a shadowy myth. It gives us some solid reasons for thinking, that if he was not what later legends made him, he was something greater and better—better than a worker of miracles, and greater than a lordly bishop ; that he was a true man of God, and a witness for Christ ; perhaps that he was the Gaelic evangelist of his age—(shall I say it?) the Gaelic Whitfield, or the John Macdonald, of the eleventh century ; a man of whom we need not scruple also to believe that his prayers had really power with God, and whose special requests may have obtained such evident answers from above, that it was natural for an admiring people, not given to draw distinctions, to ascribe to him the gifts of miracles and prophecy. I have sometimes indulged the fancy that we have still among us, in the familiar name of one of our localities, a memorial of the saintly reputation which he bore even in early youth, while he yet resided in his parental home ; that even then his devoted piety and his manifest communion with heaven, caused it to be said that angels had been seen encamping round the place of his abode ; so that the awe-stricken people gave to the spot where the vision was supposed to have appeared, the name which from time imme-

morial it has borne in both our languages, of *Cnoc-nan-aingeal*, the Angels' Hill.*

We can now, then, understand the origin both of the Gaelic name of our town—the only Gaelic one it is known to have ever borne—and of its peculiar ecclesiastical character. Malcolm was for some years of his reign contemporary with Duthach, and when in this province, may very possibly have met with the venerated man, and been aided by his counsel and prayers. At all events, as it cannot have been many years after the saint's death that Tain was constituted as a free municipality, it was natural that the Gaelic-speaking king (Malcolm is said to have been the last of the kings who usually spoke Gaelic) should give it, in honour of the famous man who had had his origin within it, the Gaelic name of *Baile-Dhuthaich* or Duthach's-town. It is intelligible, also, that for the same reason (as well as perhaps in deference to his pious but somewhat superstitious queen, Margaret, by whose advice he was not only founding churches but introducing Papal customs and authority into Scotland) he procured for it the special "protection of the Apostolic See," and the consecration

* This name appears in our oldest local records, and was in common use until, in 1863, railway operations cut right through the hill. Fortunately the necessity of erecting a bridge at the spot has preserved the memory of the exact locality. It is noteworthy that a hillock in the far-famed Iona bears the very same name, given it (tradition says) in commemoration of an interview which St Columba had with a company of heavenly visitants on his arrival in that island.

of its whole territory, marked by four girth-crosses, into a place of asylum or sanctuary.*

Of such a right of sanctuary there is no need in the present day; and if it existed now, it could do almost nothing but evil. It would tend to convert our town and parish into a receptacle of thieves and dishonest debtors, of vagabonds and criminals of every kind, seeking to shelter themselves from the pursuit of law. But in those lawless times, when might was often held to constitute right—when the sword of justice was grasped in a hand often too feeble to wield it with effect against the strong oppressor—when the oppressed cried out, and even the long arms of the king often failed to reach far enough for his defence—it was well that there was another power, weaker and yet stronger, to which the injured or the timid could appeal with frequent success. Almost the only effectual motive that could be brought to bear on rude and violent men who feared no earthly foe, was that of religion, or of superstition; those who did not fear the king, might have some fear of God,—if not a truly religious, yet a superstitious fear of Him, and of the Church which claimed to wield His power. A guilty conscience, also, turned even brave men into cowards.

* The fact, however, that a copious fountain of pure water situated on, or nearly on, the girth boundary in the heights of the parish—(the same fountain which has now been utilised for a supply of water to the town)—has from time immemorial borne the name of St David's well, suggests the inquiry whether the donation and consecration of some at least of the lands was not due rather to Malcolm's son, David—that "*sair saunt*" to the Crown."

in places which were supposed to possess peculiar holiness ; so that only a few exceptionally reckless men dared to follow the victims of their oppression within the limits of a consecrated girth. The union, therefore, of the sacred with the civil element in the constitution of our town must, in such times as those, have greatly enhanced the benefit conferred by King Malcolm and his successors, both on it and on the surrounding district.

I have dwelt rather long on these investigations into the origin of our burgh and its privileges ; but they are evidently of primary importance, and furnish the necessary key to the understanding of what we know of its history for several subsequent centuries.

We can easily imagine that the combined advantages which have been mentioned would operate in the following centuries to give it importance and prosperity. As the market-town and centre of trade for a large district, as a seat of magisterial authority and law, as a place of considerable ecclesiastical importance, a resort of pilgrims, and a sanctuary of refuge for the distressed, it would not only obtain a permanent population of its own, but would besides attract many visitors from the surrounding neighbourhood. Persons who wanted either to sell or to buy ; those who had suffered wrongs for which they desired legal redress ; those who wished to transact legal business with each other, or to execute any legal deeds ; nay, even feudal enemies, jealous of one

another, who wished to confer on neutral ground and under the protection of the Church's sanctity, found what they wanted here. Thus to some extent, within its own limited sphere, the town would offer to the landed gentry around, and to their families, the sort of social attraction that, in our days of centralisation and rapid travelling, draws them to the great cities of the south. Nor would the tendency to resort to the town be diminished, but rather increased, as, through growing civilisation and the softening down of hostilities, the country gradually passed into a less disturbed state. Men could with greater security come to it so as to avail themselves of its advantages; and yet there continued for a long time to be disturbances and oppressions enough to make those advantages welcome and important. For the country was not wholly rid either of Norse invasions, of Highland raids, or of terrible domestic oppressors, for several centuries. Even so late as the fourteenth century, there was a notorious brigand chief in this neighbourhood (the grandson, it was said, of a Norwegian invader of royal rank), who made himself a name of terror as the Rob Roy of the north. He was called Paul MacTyre. An old chronicle* quaintly describes him as "a very takand man;" takand, that is to say, not in the sense of being attractive, but in the sense of taking away by force men's goods and

* Chronicle of the Earls of Ross.

cattle and lands ; so that he made himself master of the most of Sutherland, and of Kincardine in Ross-shire. So powerful did he become, that the family of Balnagown appear to have been fain to give him a daughter of their house in marriage, and, along with her, a legal grant of the lands in Kincardine which he had already seized, probably in order thus to preserve their remaining property, and to secure exemption from his hostile raids. From his Highland fastnesses it appears to have been his wont to lead down his armed followers upon the plains for plunder. The people of Caithness, accordingly, were obliged to purchase his forbearance by an annual tribute of black-mail ; and if we may reason from the name of a spot on the Fendom shores, known as Paul MacTyre's Hill, which, until swept away by the sea in the course of last century, used to form one of the stated halting-places in the magistrates' periodical perambulation of the marches of this burgh, it would seem that our own neighbourhood was not unfavoured with his questionable visits. Situated just at the limits of the girth, the hill I have mentioned may possibly have been the site of one of his encampments and the limit of his spoliations ; within which, across the sacred line, even he perhaps durst not venture to carry war. There was, indeed, in those days, a powerful Earl of Ross (sometimes resident at Delny in our neighbourhood, and occasionally perhaps even in this

town,* though generally in his castle at Dingwall), who possessed power and authority in the north only second to the king's, and to whom the oppressed might possibly appeal; but the Earls of Ross seem to have been themselves sometimes the chief oppressors. You doubtless remember the well-known story told of one of them, and which is true at all events of some Ross-shire chief, who, when a woman whom he had injured threatened to go to complain to the king, nailed horse-shoes under the soles of her feet, in order, as he told her, that she might be better able to perform the journey. So that, to the extent to which men stood in awe of the sanctity of St Duthach's girth and shrine, in which the people of the town could defend, and the influence of the Church vindicate that sanctity, it must have been a welcome shelter for the trembling fugitive.

Let me illustrate these remarks by narrating briefly three notable instances in which our town was resorted to as a sanctuary of refuge—the only instances, in fact, of which the record has come down to us out of the many which must have occurred during the five centuries of the existence of this privilege.

In the days of King Robert Bruce, the restorer of Scottish independence, and in the year 1306 or 1307, when his fortunes were at their lowest ebb, and

* Farquhar, commonly called first Earl of Ross, died in Tayne in 1251.—(Chronicle of the Earls of Ross.)

he was obliged to conceal himself in a small island off the coast of Ireland, his queen and daughter betook themselves for safety to the Castle of Kildrummy in Aberdeenshire ; but, dreading to be besieged there by the forces of Edward I. of England, they fled with the ladies of their Court, and with attendant knights and squires, to the sanctuary of St Duthach in Tain : unhappily to no purpose ; for the locally powerful Earl of Ross, who was on the English side, unscrupulously violated the sanctuary by seizing the fugitives and surrendering them into the hands of Edward. The lamentable issue I may give in the words of the old Scottish poet :—

“The quene, and als dam Marjory,
 Hir dochtir that syn worthely
 Was coupillit into Goddis band
 With Walter Steward of Scotland,
 That wad on na wis langar ly
 In Castell of Kildrummy
 To byd ane siege, are ridin rath
 With knichtis and squyaris bath,
 Throw Ros richt to the girth of Tane ;
 But that travele they mad in vane,
 For tha of Ross that wald not bere
 For tham na blam na yhat danger,
 Out of the girth tham all has tane,
 And syn has send them evirilkane
 Richt intill Ingland to the King,
 That gert draw all the men and hing,
 And put the ladyis in presoun—
 Sum into castell, sum in dungeon.”

No honourable deed this to tell of. Let us only hope,

that as we know the powerful Earl of Ross was by no means always on friendly terms with our townspeople, nor generally on the same side of politics with them, this act of violence and sacrilege was committed by him, not in accordance with, but against their will.*

We must leap over more than a hundred years to the next recorded incident, which, if less celebrated in the history of our country, was more important in relation to our local interests. In or about the year 1427, in the reign of James I. of Scotland, Mowat, the Laird of Freswick in Caithness, with some followers, was defeated in a hostile encounter by Thomas M'Neil of Creich—a barbarous chief, who seems to have held some of the same lands in Sutherland and Ross that had in the previous century been held by Paul MacTyre, and to have been also a follower of that notorious brigand's steps. Mowat and his companions fled for refuge into St Duthach's chapel at Tain; whither, however, they were pursued by M'Neil, who slew the poor fugitives and set fire to the chapel—actually burning it over the heads of the still living men, if our local tradition speaks true. The double outrage on God and man was not allowed to pass unavenged. James, the poet-king, had at this time undertaken the arduous and dangerous task, to which

* The names of many officials in the north who swore fealty to Edward are preserved in English records: I have not seen mention made of any one connected with Tain. Munro of Foulis fought under Bruce at Bannockburn; so did the Earl of Ross himself, who had, ere then, been reconciled to Bruce.

he subsequently fell a martyr, of repressing and punishing the cruel oppressions with which the chiefs and nobles had filled Scotland during many years, and which, during his long minority and captivity in England, had come to the most fearful height. After having administered stern justice in the south, he came, about a year after the burning of our chapel, to hold a Justice-ayre at Inverness, with the like purpose. Forty robber chiefs were arrested by his order and brought before him there ; some of these were executed immediately, others a little later. Of these last, Thomas M'Neil appears to have been one. The chief agent in effecting his apprehension was his own brother Neil, whom the King, for this service, invested with the deceased rebel's lands. We do not like the brother's act ; yet it was a striking instance of retributive providence, as against the man who had violated the most sacred feelings both of humanity and of religion.*

The remaining case is of a different kind. William Lord Crichton, a man of high influence in the reign of James III., was accused of treasonable correspondence with England. Fearing for his life, he in 1483 took refuge within the girth of Tain, residing in the vicar's house. He was followed by a macer, who, in the presence of William Johnstone, a bailie of Tain, and of Thomas Reid, a bailie of Cromarty, summoned him to

* Sir Thomas Gordon's "History of the Family of Sutherland"
"Origines Parochiales."

appear in Parliament, at Edinburgh, to answer for his treason—summoned him, but did not, because I presume he durst not, even in the King's name, lay hands on him to bring him prisoner to Edinburgh ; for the fugitive was protected by the sanctity of the girth. He did *not* obey the summons of Parliament ; and was accordingly next year subjected for non-appearance to a sentence of outlawry and forfeiture of his estates. But his life was safe. He seems to have continued to reside several years in Tain ; he subsequently went to Inverness to meet the King, and was partially reconciled to him ; but apparently he died in poverty.*

Each of the three instances which I have mentioned of the employment of our town as a place of refuge was of public interest and importance ; though two of them, at least, are far from being such cases as we would have selected, had we a choice, in illustration of the ordinary beneficent working of the institution. But we must be satisfied with those which have been handed down to us. The great dramatist has said that "the evils which men do live after them—the good is oft interred with their bones ;" and so, indeed, it happens, that history far seldomer notices the many quiet deeds of usefulness, either of men or of communities, that take place from year to year, than it does the rarer outbreaks of horrid crime.

* Reg. Mag. Sig.

Scotland, when the alderman, bailies, and community of Inverness, complained to John, Earl of Ross, that certain inhabitants of Tain and other northern parts of *their* freedom of Inverness, were interfering with their trade by buying and selling, shipping and unshipping goods. The Earl (who not only, as we have seen, at that time exercised supreme jurisdiction in the north under the King, but who sometimes did so in defiance of the King, and who, if he was then meditating the treasonable practices that subsequently cost him his earldom, may have had his own reasons for wishing to please his "neighbours of Inverness" at the expense of a less important town) addressed a threatening letter to his bailie of Tain, commanding him to give all facilities to any burgesses of Inverness who should come to Tain, to use the King's authority for the "inhalding"—that is, for preventing the exportation—of merchandise and goods. This strange attempt was all the stranger that it was made in defiance or forgetfulness of the inquisition into the privileges of our town which had been made only nineteen years before by authority of this earl's own father; and we may be pretty sure that the merchants of Tain did not submit quietly to the demands of the men of Inverness, nor fail to produce and plead the above-mentioned inquest and its result. I suspect, however, that the people of Tain, in their dealings with their own neighbours, were just as much disposed

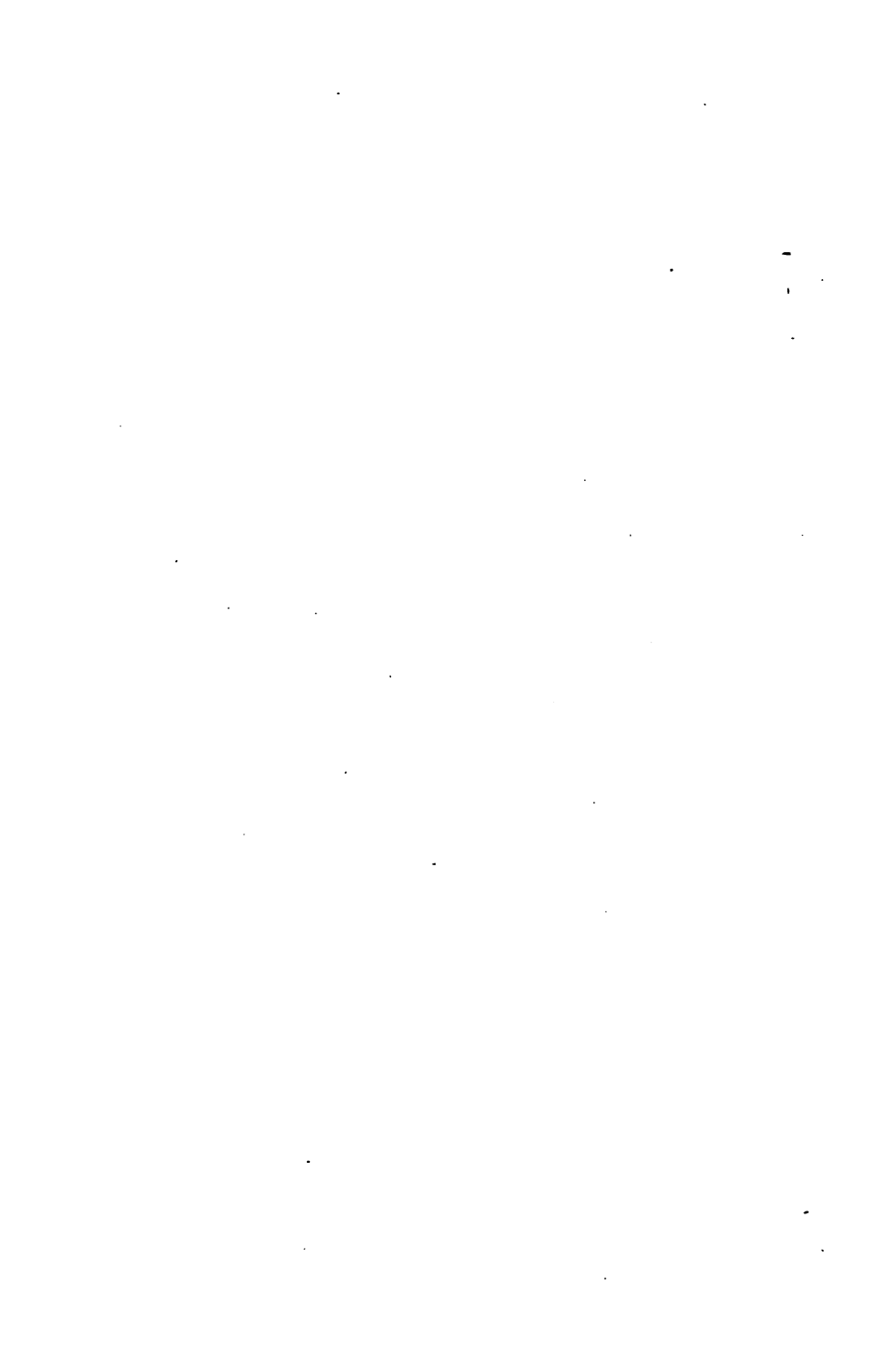
to exaggerate their privileges as the Invernessians themselves ; that they, too, claimed and sometimes enforced the right—at least in Easter Ross—of preventing the sale of goods except in Tain or by Tain-men. I do not suppose that this was a serious hardship to almost anybody ; for it was really so difficult, if not so unsafe, in those early times, for persons not armed with authority, to carry on commerce outside the circuit of privileged towns, that they probably seldom thought of attempting it ; and it was, moreover, so important for the whole country that the towns should flourish and be strong, that the benefits of the system greatly outweighed its attendant evils. Yet, such a state of things could not continue for ever ; and the people of towns like this must now submit to general competition, and depend for the success they may achieve on their own superiority in the open arena of commercial enterprise.

Of the original building of the old chapel of St Duthach, which perished in the disaster of 1427, and whose walls have stood roofless and weatherbeaten for upwards of four centuries, we have no record. I do not suppose it was ever a parish church : had it been so it would almost certainly, in accordance with a mediæval superstition (not yet obsolete) have stood due east and west, and been furnished with a window looking eastwards ; neither of which is the case. It

would, moreover, almost certainly, in accordance with another superstition of those times, have had the surrounding ground consecrated for burial ;—which we know also was not the case ; for it is only within the last two generations that burials have begun to take place beside it, in consequence of the crowded state of the churchyard within the town, which had, from time immemorial, been the only place of interment in the parish. The chapel was apparently a mere oratory or place of prayer, with accommodation, it would seem, also, for a resident hermit. The simple, if not rude, style of its architecture seems consistent with almost any date : only, as the earliest recorded tradition informs us that it stands on the site of St Duthach's birthplace, we can hardly suppose it to have been built *earlier* than the year 1065, when he died ; while, on the other hand, it is very improbable that its erection can have taken place *later* than the time of the translation of his bones, in the thirteenth century. With reference to the fine old *church* of St Duthach within the ancient churchyard, the approximate date of its erection is matter of record ; for old chronicles declare it to have been built by William, Earl of Ross (who died in 1371), aided, doubtless, by the contributions of the many votaries who came from every part of Scotland to the saint's shrine. But this, as the same chronicles declare, was a *re*-building. There had, therefore, been a still older



SOUTH-WEST VIEW OF ST DUTHUS' CHURCH.



parish church, either on the same site, or near it. It has been thought by some that the remains of that oldest church of all still exist in a remarkable ancient enclosed burial-place (or "chapel" so-called), within the churchyard, the style of the oldest part of which indicates both high antiquity and architectural taste. How old it is, we cannot say: it may have reached back to the very first introduction of Christianity into this northern district, and been of Culdee origin; for the accumulation of human dust within it, and in the churchyard around it, speaks of a very high antiquity indeed. It was in this most ancient chapel or church, probably, that Duthach himself worshipped as a boy and young man; in it, he may have officiated occasionally in mature life; and to it, perhaps, his bones were finally translated.*

It is difficult for us now to realize the feelings which, in mediæval ages, used to gather crowds of worshippers to the shrine of a famous saint; what extraordinary homage was rendered to his sacred relics; what miracles of healing were believed to be performed by means of them; what power was attributed to prayers offered up beside them; and what merit and efficacy to pilgrimages made to the hallowed place. The name of Duthach had become somehow peculiarly celebrated in Scotland; so that relics of

* If at any future time the deeply covered foundations of this chapel should be exposed, it will be interesting to search for ancient remains—possibly inscriptions—which might turn conjecture into certainty.

him were preserved, and even chapels erected in his honour, in various places, such as Edinburgh, Dunfermline, and Aberdeen : but his native town of Tain, and especially three most sacred spots within its girth—namely, the chapel erected on the site “quhair he was borne,” the chapel “within the kirk-yard,” where, probably, his remains were laid, and, lastly, the handsome church erected in honour of him in the 14th century, were especially revered. Those who could not personally come contented themselves with sending costly gifts; but others crowded from every part of the land. The remoteness of the locality did not hinder this, perhaps rather promoted it; for the dangers and hardships attendant on the long journey—sometimes performed barefoot, or in ways still more painful—were supposed to enhance the merit and efficacy of the penitential act. Those who were afflicted with bodily diseases came seeking to be cured; for it was currently said that many had been restored through the virtue of St Duthach's bones. His very shirt was preserved in the sanctuary: marvellous powers were ascribed to it, and the Earl of Ross wore it for protection when he went to war.* Men, too, whose consciences made them uneasy, but who had no wish to renounce their sins—in whose hearts there was neither true

* The English found St Duthach's shirt on the person of that Earl of Ross who was slain at the battle of Halidon Hill, and courteously restored it to Tain. But though it was thus restored, one would suppose it must have been with its reputation as a life-preserver considerably damaged.

repentance nor yet faith in the all-cleansing blood of Christ—were glad to have a humanly-devised road to salvation by pilgrimage. Not but that they might be sometimes told by the better class of their priests, that faith and repentance were necessary in order to their obtaining the forgiveness of their sins. Not, also, but that there were some weary and heavy-laden souls among those trooping crowds, broken and contrite in heart, who came seeking rest for their wounded consciences, but who were by God's grace preserved from finding it in the relics or prayers of a saint—from finding it until they found it in the blood of Him to whom that saint, could he have spoken to them from the unseen world, would have bid them go. But it is not of such cases as these that the memory has come down to us, but of a few to which the accident of rank has given an interest of a more external kind.

For it was not the common people alone who performed pilgrimages to St Duthach's, and who offered gifts to his church, but the nobles and the kings of Scotland themselves. It is, for example, not an uninteresting fact that we have a record of a costly offering made to the church of St Duthach at Tain in the oldest will known to be extant of any Scotchman—namely, in that of Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith, dated 30th September, 1390 (the year, it may be remarked, of the death of Robert II. and of the accession of Robert III.—two of the

Scottish kings who were benefactors to this town). Sir James's legacy consisted of his "robes of cloth of gold and silk, and his furred robes."*

It is not improbable that many of our Scottish kings performed pilgrimages to St Duthach's shrine. In fact, the royal journeys to these northern parts were, in the days of the independent Scottish monarchy, so frequent on other accounts, and St Duthach's name was so famous, that it is possible that most of them may have visited the place where his remains were honoured. Perhaps, for example, Alexander III. did so.† That James III. visited Tain is in the highest degree probable: it is certain that on his marriage tour he travelled, with his young Queen (Margaret of Denmark), at least as far north as Inverness, where he remained long enough to make excursions all round, if so inclined; and we know that soon thereafter he procured from the Bishop of Ross and the Pope at Rome an ecclesiastical constitution of St Duthach's church to be what was called a college, himself liberally endowing its numerous officials out of the lands of the crown. Those officials were, a provost, five canons (all of these regular priests), two deacons or sub-deacons, a sacrist with an assistant-clerk, and three singing boys. This constitution was established in 1487. It was a goodly array, certainly, of ecclesiastical officials, in a parish

* See Innes's "*Sketches of Early Scottish History*," p. 332-4.

† See Appendix, Note III.

which had previously possessed a rector (perhaps non-resident) and a perpetual vicar, as well as a chaplain and hermit of the chapel; at least we must have thought it so unless we had reason to know that these officials often were not separate persons, and that several offices were at times vested in the person of a single man.

After the death of James III. an annual sum was paid out of the royal treasury, doubtless by order of his son and successor, James IV., to the chaplain of St Duthach, for the purpose of saying masses in behalf of the deceased monarch's soul. The tragic story of James III.'s fate,—first, of his defeat by an army nominally headed by his own youthful son, and then of his barbarous murder by one of the pursuers in the house where he had taken refuge,—is well known; as is also the life-long penance to which the son subjected himself after his accession to the throne, by wearing an iron chain, to which he added a link each successive year, round his body, in order partly to disavow complicity in his father's murder, but partly also to appease his conscience, which did perhaps charge him with culpable acquiescence in the rebellion which had led to it. It was doubtless in part for the same reason that he performed frequent penitential pilgrimages both to the shrine of St Ninian at Whitehorn, in Galloway, and to that of the famous saint of Ross-shire; though he was far from being free

from other sins that troubled his conscience, and contributed to multiply these superstitious acts. The gallant monarch appears to have visited St Duthach's regularly every year, perhaps without the omission of one, during at least twenty successive years—from 1493 to 1513. These facts have been made known to us chiefly from the recorded entries of the king's personal expenses in the books of his treasurer, which are so curious that I cannot deny myself the gratification of quoting them almost entire from the paper of the zealous scholar to whose antiquarian researches I owe my first acquaintance with them.*

A.D. 1495-6 (during Lent). Clothes were furnished to the King when he passed to St Dutho's *again Pasche*.

1496, April. Clothes furnished to the King when he passed to St Dutho's *agane Whitsunday*.

1496, July 1. Item to the King quhile he raid to Sanct Duthowis, £10.

Item to Henry Fowlis for a relik he maid to the King to offer to Sanct Duthow, £2 14s.

Three visits, it thus appears, in a single year, and all within three months! This is something so remarkable, that it necessitates the supposition that the King had an extraordinary motive for such excessive devotion.

* See a paper read in February, 1846, to the Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh, by David Laing, LL.D., of the Signet Library. See also Preface to the first published volume of the Lord High Treasurer's Accounts, by Thomas Dickson, Esq., to whom I am indebted for the knowledge of probably the first visit paid by James IV. to Tain. This was in 1493, or three years earlier than the earliest of the visits ascertained by Dr Laing. I take this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging the important help I have received from Mr Dickson in my researches, and the unvarying courtesy with which that help has been rendered.

- 1496-7, March 16. The King rode from Brechin on a pilgrimage to St Duthois, in Ross. On that occasion 18s. were paid to the ferryaris of Spey, of Ardrossier, and of Cromarty. At Tain he lodged with the vicar.
- 1497, Oct. 10. The King again visited St Duthow's, when 11s. 6d. was paid in passing to the ferryar of Dee, and 18s. to the piparis of Aberdeen.

The treasurer's accounts for the next three years, says Dr Laing, are not preserved ; but in

- 1501, November. James IV. was in Ross-shire. On the 12th of that month 14s. was paid for the freight of a boat from Inverness to the Chanonry with the King ; and next day 5s. was given "to the Hermit of Sanct Duchois Chapell."
- 1503, Oct. 2. A message was sent to bring Sanct Duchois relique from Edinburgh, and to meet the King at Perth. Having set out for the North, he was at Aberdeen on the 6th, crossed the Spey on the 7th, was at Elgin on the 8th, at Beaully on the 9th, TAYNE on the 11th, when 2s. 2d. was paid for schoeing of the King's horse.
- 1504, Oct. 22. We find the King at Tayne whilst the Queen was at Dunfermline, where she was detained "by pestilence." There was paid "to the man in Tayne that beris Sanct Duthois bell, 3s." Next day the King made an offering of 14s. "in Sanct Duchois chapell, quhair he was borne ;"* also "in Sanct Duchois chapell, in the kirk-yard of Tayne," "in Sanct Duchois kirk," and "at the stok of Sanct Duchois town."

On this occasion the King amused himself on his journey northwards in no very penitential mood. For on the 19th of the month there was paid to "the madinnis of Forres that dansit to the king, 9s. ; to

* See Appendix, Note III.

the madinnis that dansit at Elgin siclyke, 9s. 6d. ; and to the madinnis that dansit at Darnaway, 14s. ;”* and the next day, we find him completing his pilgrimage to Tain. Truly characteristic this of superstitious worship ! Sometimes, however, his conscience appears to have made his pilgrimage somewhat liker a penitential journey. Bishop Leslie, says Dr Laing, thus describes one of the King’s visits to the shrine, apparently under the year 1507. “The haill realm of Scotland was in sic quietness that the King raid him allane with great diligence on ane day from Striveling to Perth, and Aberdeen to Elgin, in post, quhair he reposit him on ane hard burd ane certain space of the nycht, in Mr Thomas Leslie’s hous, the parson of Kingussie, and in the morn raid to Sanct Duthois, in Rosse, to the masse, the last day of August, but returnit again to Striveling to tournay, accompanyit with the nobilitie of these cuntries.”

On this occasion the treasurer’s book tells us that there was paid

To the King himself in his purss, quhen he rade alane to the North, £26.

“Queen Margaret,” adds Dr Laing, “appears for the first time to have visited the North of Scotland in 1511.”

* What brought the King to Darnaway ? “He had,” says Innes, in the Spalding Club edition of the “*Familie of Innes*,” “settled his early love, the Lady Jean Kennedy, at Darnaway, and given their son a grant of the great earldom ; and afterwards, when riding on pilgrimage to St Duthac of Tain, he would turn aside to visit the banks of the Findhorn.”

In December of that year there was paid "to ane pardonar with Sanct Duthous Crouss, 2s."

1512, Aug. 27. Item deliverit to the King's grace ane relict of Sanct Dutho's, set in silver, waijed 36 unce 3 grotæ wecht, price of the unce 3s. Summa £27 17s. 3d.
Item for making of the samyn, £5 4s.

The next and last entry possesses a melancholy interest. In the year 1513, the King secluded himself for eight days in a monastery at Stirling, without seeing any person, and meditated a pilgrimage to the Holy Land—"such a haud," says an annalist, "had superstition gottin ouer him." What he did accomplish, however, was one visit more to St Duthach's shrine.

1513, Aug. 4. Item for three bonets to the King the tyme he past to Sanct Duchois, 36s. Aug. 8. Item to the King's grace when he past to Sanct Duchois, £66.

One month later, on the 9th of September, 1513, the gallant monarch was killed on the fatal field of Flodden. We can hardly wonder that his many pilgrimages excited remark, even in that superstitious age; nor that the English, in a poem of exultation over their victory of Flodden field, taunted the Scots with their devotion to "St Triman [Ringan or Ninian] of Quhytehorn, and DOFFIN, THEIR DEMIGOD OF ROSS."*

At least one royal visit more is supposed to have been paid to St Duthach's shrine. The Popish ad-

* Weber's "Battle of Flodden Field," a poem of the sixteenth century.

visers of King James V., wishing to put him out of the way of being influenced in behalf of his young relative Patrick Hamilton, the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation, instigated him, we are told, to perform a pilgrimage to St Duthach's at Tain. There is no record, however, of the actual performance of the journey. But it has been generally presumed that it took place. The footpath leading across a peat-bog in the upper part of the parish, which is familiarly known to all of us as "the King's Causey," and the narrow winding lane leading therefrom into the town, which we dignify with the name of King Street, are the only local memorials which we have preserved of the royal visits. The uniform local tradition says that the "Causey" was constructed by the people of the town expressly for the king,—for which of the kings I know not,—on their learning that he was on his way to St Duthach's barefoot.

Thus the last of the royal visits was connected with the great religious revolution which put an end to those vain pilgrimages for ever. It was in the reign of James V. that the light of the Reformation dawned on Scotland. That most blessed of all religious movements since the first propagation of Christianity soon made its influence felt in Ross-shire. As our town was in such constant communication, and especially religious communication, with the south, the new doctrine must have been early heard of, perhaps

early taught here. Patrick Hamilton was, if not the resident, at least the titular abbot of the monastery of Fearn, which was in the immediate neighbourhood, and in the closest connection with Tain: and his martyrdom can have hardly failed to excite interest, and to stir up inquiry in this quarter into the religious opinions for which he died. Here, too, as in other parts of Scotland, there appears to have been enough of religious corruption and moral depravation among the dignitaries of the Church to revolt the consciences of the people, and so prepare their minds for a reformation. Some of the neighbouring potent chiefs—and especially the head of that family of Munro of Foulis, whose community both of political and religious feeling with this town is traceable in its effects throughout most of her history—seem to have early taken a decided stand on the Protestant side. And not only he; but Nicholas Ross, the Provost of the Collegiate Church of Tain, though a man who in his own domestic life had manifested the demoralising influence of the Popish system, was present in the Parliament of 1560 as Abbot of Fearn (which office he held *in commendam* along with his Provostship); and both voted for the suppression of Popery. Surrounded by so many favourable influences, the people of Tain became such decided Protestants, that their zeal procured the notice and approbation of the “good regent” Murray, who, in acknowledgment of it, bestowed on them the gift of

a finely carved oaken pulpit for their church. Would that we still possessed this relic of our forefathers' zeal,—by far the most honourable relic, in my estimation, that our town contained, but which a lamentable negligence has, within the memory of the present and immediately preceding generations, suffered to be broken, and its ornamentation carried away piecemeal by wanton hands! Few places were able to boast of so honourable a memorial.* Indeed, I always look back with peculiar gratification on the zeal of our forefathers which it commemorated: for the Reformation was not for their material interests, but put an end for ever to the halo of fictitious sacredness with which St Duthach's shrine had invested their town; so that its privilege of sanctuary fell into desuetude, pilgrimages ceased, the crowds no longer flocked to it, noblemen and kings visited it no more. I cannot but think there must have been a real work of God in this parish, a true religious reformation and revival, to stir up our forefathers to that public zeal against the very superstitions by which they made their worldly gain.

* I leave the foregoing sentences as they were penned and first printed. But Regent Murray's pulpit has now been restored to its original beauty; for the frame-work had happily escaped destruction, and portions of the ornamentation have been recovered from private collections, and have not only been fitted into their places, but have given the clue to the completion of the original design.



REGENT MORAY'S PULPIT.



CHAPTER II.

THE LATER HISTORY.

WITH the epoch of the Reformation, the old history of Tain, properly so called, comes to an end, and a wholly new era of her history begins—an era to which that great religious revolution affords a key as important as does her connection with St Duthach to that which we have already considered. The two periods have certain elements in common, and yet differ greatly. Common to both is a predominantly religious character, without which our town's history would have little either to interest strangers or to stir enthusiasm in her own children; there being hardly an event worthy of note, in either portion of it, that was not connected, directly or indirectly, with religion. The religion of the older period was, however, largely external and superstitious; that of the later was more spiritual and pure. The older history, fragmentary though our knowledge of it is, has an almost epical unity, and, therewith, a certain romantic

interest ; for it is dominated from beginning to end by one great name—that of the patron saint, who was born in this town, and whose reputation for sanctity invested not only his own memory, but his very birthplace, with a halo that made it, for the long period of 500 years, a resort for religious pilgrims, and a refuge for fugitives from all parts of Scotland ; so that we have glimpses of kings, queens, and nobles, as well as savage chiefs and men of violence, flitting across the scene. During the second period, our burgh and parish were left very much to live their own quiet life, unmarked by any factitious distinction from other parishes and burghs in the North. But the history does not on that account become uninteresting or commonplace ; on the contrary, Tain has participated, to an extent much beyond what her small population and her remoteness from the national centre could have made antecedently probable, in most of the great movements that have agitated our country for the last 300 years—her inhabitants generally taking the side of high religious principle in the struggles that have made Scottish history during that period illustrious. I compare it in this respect to our own inland firth, that is shut in from the great sea, and sleeps for the most part in calm undisturbed by the outer storms, but feels those storms nevertheless, and tells us of them by the breakers that boil and foam over the bar of the Gizen

Briggs at its entrance ; that responds also to every tidal change without, presenting at each ebb the aspect of a wide expanse of yellow sand ; but, with every flowing tide, re-converted into a navigable lake, whose surface spreads out before the eye like a beauteous mirror of blue : even thus have our burgh and parish, and, I will add, all Easter Ross, responded to every important movement of Scottish national, and especially of Scottish religious, life ; and it is, to ourselves at least, instructive and stimulating, while we study those movements, and the principles that gave birth to them, on the larger national scale, to contemplate them more closely also, though on a smaller scale, in the events of our own local history.

It would be interesting to know the appearance and condition of Tain at the point of junction of its ancient and modern histories. In an old quatrain, probably of some antiquity, which has been published in a recent collection of Gaelic proverbs,* and in which a number of places in the North are enumerated, with an epithet attached to each, Tain is the only place that is described by its appearance. It is called *Baile-Dhuthaich boidheach*, or “Duthus-town the bonny.” On the assumption that the epithet is as early as the date we now speak of, it is interesting to conclude that Tain struck strangers from early times,

* “A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases,” by Alexander Nicholson, M.A., LL.D.

as it does now, as a pretty little town. Its situation, and the grouping of its principal buildings into a cluster in the centre, must even then have given it a picturesque appearance. The Church of St Duthus was there in its original beauty ; there, I suppose, was also the old "steeple," not the same as that which now forms so striking a feature of the place, nor even occupying exactly the site of the present tower, but standing within the churchyard, being properly, indeed, the bell-tower of the church, though a detached building, and its style, we may presume, being in keeping with the church, and, therefore, at least as imposing as its more modern successor. A castle, the residence of the heritable or royal bailie, stood a little to the east, on what is still known as the Castle Brae. The old chapel, where St Duthach had been born, was to be seen below the town, roofless, but its walls in a less ruinous state than now.

As to its social condition, Tain was at that time a little capital to the whole country around ; for men were attracted to it by secular and religious motives combined. At least three times a year, crowds flocked to the great religious festivals held in St Duthus' Church ; and as is still very commonly the case in Roman Catholic towns on the Continent, occasion was taken immediately after to hold fairs or markets in the churchyard (thus under the shadow of the Church's protection), and from the churchyard extend-

ing into the High Street of the town. To these fairs, country people carried the produce of their farms and their rude home-manufactures for sale, in *callachies*—little carts, with railed sides and solid wheels (such as some of us remember to have often seen loaded with peats from Edderton), in which likewise they carried home their purchases. Dealers came also from the far south with all sorts of goods, and the fairs were in many ways so important and enjoyable that the neighbouring proprietors and their families liked to attend them: perhaps even the pilgrim kings may, when visiting St Duthus, have sometimes waited to be present at them.

The people of the town were doubtless very similar to what they are now; for the race is the same, and human nature does not change. There were the two languages as at present; only that Gaelic was then much more prevalent.

On these festive occasions there would be much hospitality, kindness, and fun; so liable, however, to be interrupted by brawls, that the Magistrates always appointed a market-guard, under the command of a captain, to keep the peace. One such brawl is recorded to have taken place in 1583, which had a fatal termination. Captain James Ross, "brother's son to the Laird of Achlossin, and Patrick Yvat with him, were slain in the chalmer of Andrew Ross, in Tain, at 8 hours afore noon or thereby, by Nicolas.

Ross and Walter Ross, with their complices ;” and it may give an idea of the state of public justice at this time, when I mention that Nicolas Ross escaped the penal consequences of the homicide, not in virtue of a trial and acquittal, but of a Royal remission exempting him from trial ; the remission being granted him ten years after the fact, probably for a pecuniary payment ; but also through family influence—for the deed of remission expressly designates him brother of the Laird of Invercarron. The shedding of human blood went for little in those days ; and only as a more spiritual religion gradually leavened the population, did human life come to be estimated as above all money price.

The external religion of those times was doubtless imposing. St Duthus’ Church, on festal occasions, would shine resplendent with gold and silver—both of the vessels used in the ceremonies, and of the relic cases and other costly gifts of wealthy devotees. The priests would be seen moving about in gorgeous vestments, celebrating the mass for the supposed benefit of the souls of those who had endowed the Church, as well as for the worshippers present, and a band of white-robed choristers sang matins and vespers daily for the same objects. We can imagine the influence which all this pretentious worship would have on many minds ; but we also know how unsatisfactory it would be to those who

were taught by the Spirit of God to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Of these latter, there would seem to have been at this time not a few ; and to such the doctrine of Divine grace, through the blood of Christ, and by regeneration of the Holy Ghost, as preached by the Reformers, would be as cold waters to a thirsty soul. The oaken pulpit, which was presented by the *Good Regent Moray*, the friend of John Knox, to the people of Tain, “for their zeal in the cause of the Reformation,” and which, as now restored, adorns the old church, is the standing monument of the religious feeling of our town at this important epoch.

I have already hinted at some of the influences that probably led to this state of feeling. The first was the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton. The “reek” of that martyrdom, wherever else it may have been carried, must have been quickly borne to his own Monastery of Fearn, and to Tain in its close neighbourhood. It can hardly have been an accidental coincidence that within seventeen years, if not sooner, Nicolas Ross, Hamilton’s second successor in the Abbacy of Fearn, and at the same time Provost of the Collegiate Church of St Duthach, openly professed the Reformed faith. We know too little of the private history of this man to be able to determine what was the measure of his religious influence—how far he led the Reforming movement here, or was himself led by it. His early life, like that of many Romish

dignitaries of those days, had been by no means exemplary, as is proved by his application for Royal "letters of legitimation" in behalf of three illegitimate sons, when purchasing from Balnagown the estate of Easter and Wester Gany (Geanies), to settle upon them. But as, in addition to his early profession of Protestantism, we know that in the Parliament of 1560 (in which, as Abbot of Fearn, he had a seat), he voted for the Reformation, we cannot doubt that his local influence also was now exerted in the same direction. Whether he himself preached, we do not know; but his authority, as the great man of the town and district, must have been great; and out of the revenues which had been his as Provost of St Duthus, the Protestant ministers of Tain were afterwards supported. I am disposed, therefore, to assign him the honourable place of one of the effective promoters of the Reformation in the North.

The external change which took place in Tain through the Reformation must have been a very great one. The collegiate establishment of St Duthus was abolished; its splendid ceremonial ceased, the daily singing of its choir was no longer heard, nor were processions of its priests seen any more. Probably also the building was dismantled; and in various ways a blank must have been made in the popular life. What was there to fill the blank? The Word of God; and this, to those who received it, was everything. A

copy of the Bible, strongly bound in oak, was, says tradition, at this time chained to the reading-desk in the church, and read aloud daily by a reader specially appointed, at the hour when people came from the country to do business in the town. Occasionally there would be visits from George Munro, the Superintendent and Commissioner for the Plantation of Churches in the North, who is said to have been an able preacher and very pious man. The first regular minister of Tain (he had charge also of Edderton, Tarbat, and Nigg) was named Finlay Manson.

The leaven of spiritual truth which was now introduced among our ancestors had to work its way, of course, against many obstacles; and a proportion of the people—we cannot say what proportion—doubtless clung long to their old beliefs and habits. It will not surprise us, therefore, to find remnants of the Romish worship and of its superstitious practices surviving in some quarters for a considerable time. The pilgrimages, for example, did not cease instantaneously—not, indeed, completely for two hundred years. I have it on good traditional authority that down even to the latter half of last century, persons were sometimes seen paying religious visits to the old ruined chapel below the town. Still grosser superstitions survived here and there, and perhaps in some minds gained even additional force. Persons, for example, who had sought the healing of disease or

other benefits from St Duthach's relics, now that they were deprived of these, were fain to fall back, if they had no higher faith, on witchcraft as their only resource. Witchcraft and charms were at this time much resorted to, the belief in them having come down through the ages as a survival from old Paganism. The corrupted Christianity of the Middle Ages had neither destroyed, nor done much to weaken these superstitions; had, indeed, rather fostered the feelings on which they lived, by setting up what were virtually rival charms or fetiches of its own, in the guise of crosses, holy water, relics of the saints, priestly masses, and the like. The doctrine of the Reformation, by bringing men into conscious, direct relation with God—the one God of grace, providence, and nature—sapped the Pagan and the Romish superstitions at their foundation; but time was needed for this better influence to produce its full effect on men's daily life, for superstition often survives as a feeling and a practice after men have become ashamed to avow it as a belief. We know that it has by no means wholly died out even yet, and in those days it was prevalent in all ranks of society, in every part of Scotland and of Europe. We shall not wonder, therefore, to find that it existed in this town and neighbourhood. Curiously, there have been handed down to us the name, and even nickname, of a Tain witch of those days—her name, Marjory

M'Alister—her nickname, Loskie Loutart ; * and the name of a Tain wizard, William M'Gillivray, and his nickname, *Dame*. † Both the witch and the wizard were involved in a charge of magic and attempted murder by poisoning, said to have been practised by them at the instigation of Catharine Ross, Lady Foulis, second wife of Robert Mòr Munro, that first Protestant Baron of Foulis whom I have already mentioned as taking a prominent part in the Reformation, and as exercising a high influence in promoting it in Easter Ross. Marjory M'Alister was said to have made for this lady an image of clay, to be set up and shot at with elf arrows, the object being to cause the person whom the image represented (the lady's stepson, her husband's heir), to pine away and die. William M'Gillivray was sentenced to be burnt for having sold to the lady a "box of witchcraft," that is, of poison, for the same end. The woman M'Alister

* The nickname, as copied correctly from the criminal records (Pitcairn, in his "Criminal Trials," had incorrectly read it *Loskie Loncart*). appears to be a Lowland pronunciation of the Gaelic *Loisg an Ladar*, i.e., "Burn the Ladle"—a sufficiently appropriate epithet for a reputed witch, who was probably an old woman accustomed to make "broth," perhaps also medicinal or poisonous decoctions, of wild herbs. It was near Forres, not a hundred miles from Tain, that Shakespeare represents three witches as preparing an abominable broth of all manner of horrible ingredients, with the help of a weird incantation having the refrain—

"Double, double, toil and trouble ;
Fire, burn ; and cauldron, bubble."

† Probably *Damh*, which, in Gaelic, means not only "an ox," but also a native "doctor" or "herbalist."

was not similarly dealt with ; probably because a distinction was made between witchcraft that took the effective form of the administration of poison, and that which confined itself to the fanciful method of shooting at a clay image. A son, also, of the same distinguished family was said to have employed a witch to cure him of a fever, which she pretended to do by having him carried out in a blanket in a frosty night in January, and laid down in a new-made grave at the boundary between two baronies, thus to transfer his fever to a step-brother, who should die instead of him. Both the lady and the son were subjected to a form of trial before the High Court of Justiciary on these charges ; but were acquitted, as was certain to be the case from the composition of the juries, who, in both trials, consisted mostly of clansmen of their own, Rosses and Munroes, many of these being burgesses of Tain. If, notwithstanding the acquittals so obtained, anyone still believes the accusations to have been founded in truth, he will only have an illustration of the frequently remarked fact that good and truly Christian men may be sorely tried by misconduct in their own families ; for it is satisfactory to be able to say that no taint of suspicion ever fell on the good Baron himself, but that, on the contrary, the actors in the matter showed the utmost anxiety to prevent their dealings with witches from coming to his ears.

Tain had received the immunities of a free trading town from its founder, Malcolm Canmore. It seems to have had Magistrates called Bailies from a very early date; but I cannot find that there was any Provost of the Burgh, called by that title, before the Reformation. The oldest Bailie would be virtually Provost; but the title seems to have belonged exclusively to the ecclesiastical head of St Duthus, who was really invested with some civil rights, among which was that of receiving legal fines when inflicted on delinquents by the heritable Bailie in name of the King. The ecclesiastical Provost's civil rights probably ceased with the disestablishment of Popery; and we therefore find Provost Nicolas Ross, six years after the Reformation, entering into a singular contract with the heritable Bailie, Innes of The Plaids, by which the Bailie bound himself to hold courts, as formerly, whenever he should be required by the Provost so to do, and to pay over to the Provost two-thirds of all the fines that should be imposed. This was a curious agreement; the state of public justice which it indicates cannot have been satisfactory. By what process the title of Provost passed over to the chief civil magistrate, and when and how the local courts were placed on a more satisfactory basis, has not been ascertained. The oldest extant charter of the burgh, a charter of confirmation and novodamus, granted by King James VI. in the year

1587, pre-supposes the existence of all the regular burgh authorities, ratifying, but not creating, their powers.

We now approach a period when Tain was again to assume prominence in Scottish ecclesiastical affairs. Amongst the endowments of St Duthus' Church had been a number of chaplainries, so called ; that is to say, of annuities presented to priests, who were bound in return to say masses for the souls of the donors. After the Reformation, these chaplainries were, in partial carrying out of Knox's enlightened scheme of education, usually granted as bursaries to young men, to enable them to study at the University. No better use for them could have been found. The application of one of them is specially interesting to us. The chaplainry of Newmore in St Duthus' Church was held for several years by a student named John Munro, nephew of that first Protestant Baron of Foulis of whom I have already spoken. This John Munro, before the end of the century, became minister of Tain. He was also called Sub-Dean of Ross; this title being probably an accompaniment of a mere civil right to the emoluments of an office that had once existed in the Romish Church, but was now abolished. He was no cypher in his ministry: in the faithful execution of it he came into collision with the King himself. When James VI. succeeded in the year 1603 to the throne of England, he formed a scheme to effect a complete union between his two Kingdoms

and their two Churches. But he neither conceived this object aright, nor pursued it in a right way; for he attempted to force the Church of the smaller nation into conformity with that of the larger, and in order to this, set himself deliberately to oppress the consciences of her most devoted children. Lest the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland should thwart his scheme, he interdicted its meeting; thereby violating two principles at once—the religious principle of the Church's obligation and consequent right to meet in name of her Divine Head, whether in congregations or in General Assembly, for the performance of every duty which He has imposed on her; and the constitutional principle of the King's incompetency to forbid the meeting of a General Assembly which had been summoned in strict accordance with the laws of the kingdom, as ratified by himself. Doubtless these principles, in their practical application, involved difficulties which may have perplexed even honest and enlightened men, or may have made them think the time inopportune for the practical assertion of them: the more remarkable, therefore, was the decision and courage of the few Presbyteries—that of Tain was one of them—which deputed representatives to the interdicted Assembly; and of the nineteen ministers—one of them the celebrated John Welsh (John Knox's son-in-law), of Ayr in the far South; another, John Munro,

of Tain in the far North ; who, in spite of the interdict and of tempestuous weather, actually met at Aberdeen, and constituted the Assembly in the name of Christ. John Munro was one of three who were put in nomination for the Moderatorship of this Assembly. The King, calling it a seditious Assembly, summoned its leading members to appear before his Privy Council to answer for their conduct. Of the seventeen who appeared, ten, in submission to the Council, declared themselves to be now persuaded that the Aberdeen Assembly was "altogether unlawful;" but the remaining seven—one of them "Mr John Munro, Sub-Dean of Ross," confessed and maintained, in presence of the said Lords, that the said Assembly was "a verie lawful General Assembly." The Privy Council banished these seven faithful men to the wildest parts of Scotland — each to the farthest possible distance from his own parish. The minister of Tain was sentenced to be banished to Kintyre, the remotest part of Argyleshire, and was meanwhile imprisoned in the Castle of Doune in Perthshire. From the prison he and a brother minister contrived to effect their escape. In visiting the Castle some years ago, with my interest all awake from my recollection of this history, I wondered greatly if it had been possible for them to escape from within those lofty and massive walls. The explanation is that the constable of the Castle (whose sympathies must have

been on their side) afforded them almost every liberty of holding intercourse with friends, both while confined in the Castle, and while being removed to their places of banishment; for which practical sympathy he himself was subsequently imprisoned. Mr John Munro, making his way home to Tain, resumed his regular ministrations among his people. But the stipend which had formerly been paid him through the Crown authorities was now withheld, and must have been made up to him, if made up at all, by the pure affection of his people. Thus matters continued for three or four years, during which the King succeeded in putting down all effectual resistance to his will in the Church of Scotland; and the General Assembly, while its most faithful men were silenced or absent, acquiesced in his proposals. But he could not brook the continued opposition, however powerless, even of a few ministers, and he directed his Scottish Privy Council to take steps to compel their submission. The Council accordingly addressed the following letter to the Provost and Bailies of Tain:—*

"TRAISTE FREINDS,—After oure hairtly commendationis : Whereas Mr Johnne Manro, minister, being of a lang tyme bigane denunceit rebelle and putt to the horne for an heich contempt, and offence committit be him agains the King, his sacred Majestie, and being of new chargit to haif compeirit befoir his Majestie's Counsaill to haif answerit upon his said offence, he takand the cryme upon him, hes absentit himself, and compearit

* Published by the late Dr Laing, among "Original Letters relating to Ecclesiastical Affairs." Vol. I., page 425.

not, and is thairfor of new crinit to be denuncit rebelle, and
 jett to the borne : and notwithstanding of his rebellious, we
 are informit that he has his ordinar residence in that toune,
 and uses his ministerie there as if he wer a lauchfull subject,
 wherent we mervell not a little, that you, who are his Majestie's
 officers, armed with his Majestie's Royal power and auctoritie,
 should by your connivance, suffer any such personis, who standis
 under his Majestie's offence, hef so peaceable a residence and free
 exercise of their calling among you, seeing in the dewitie of
 your offices you stand answerable to his Majestie for every such
 error and oversight, wherewith in reason you may be burdennit ;
 and thairfor chairgis are direct againis you for the apprehensioun
 of the said Mr Johnne, and keeping of him prisonner in some
 chalmers of your toune quhil he purge himself of his rebellious.
 The execution of the quhillis chairgis, we hef hereby thought
 meet to recommend unto your cair and diligence, admonishing
 you, that if you be remiss or negligent thairin, that not only
 will you be maid to gif accompt of your bipast error and over-
 sight in this poynt, but such other ordour will be tane with you
 as your negligence in such a case requireth. And so committing
 you to God's protection, we rest,—Your goode freindis,

" PERTH.	A. CANCEL.
ABIRCORNE.	SANCT ANDROIS.
D. SCONE.	GLASGOW.
ROXBURGH.	GLENCAIRNE.

"Edinburgh, 24th May, 1610.

"To our Right Traiste Freindis, The Provost and Baillies
 of Tayne."

We can conceive the sensation which the arrival of
 this letter must have created in the town ; but our
 precise information as to the course of these events
 ends here, there being no extant burgh, parochial, or
 presbytery records of the period. We only know
 further that, five years after this, John Munro died at
 Tain ; but everything we do know of his character and

history, as a man who had boldly resisted the King's invasion of the freedom of the Church, who had stood bravely to his principles in the presence of the Privy Council when the majority of his brethren were succumbing, who had, moreover, resumed and continued his ministerial labours among his people without his former legal salary from the Crown,—everything assures us that such a man was not likely to have been terrified by the threat, or even by the experience, of imprisonment in his own town (where he would have the sympathies of all the best of his people) into a violation of his conscience, such as would be involved in submission, at the end, to the King's usurped authority in sacred things. We would fain indeed have more particular information of his latter days; but it is something to know of him that he, the minister of this small northern town, was one of the few who first lifted into prominence, and who maintained at the cost of personal suffering and loss, the true principles of religious freedom—principles which, after the death of these first witnesses, slept indeed for a generation, but then revived with a power that shook the throne of both the kingdoms.

The Magistrates of the town were busy at this very time in procuring a second charter from King James VI. for the more exact definition of their magisterial powers, and of the extent of the burgh lands.

About the year 1626 much interest was awakened

in these northern parts in the great struggle of the Thirty Years' War in Germany, and two regiments were formed, one under the command of Lord Reay, the chief of the Mackays, the other under Munro of Obsdale, to fight under Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, "the Lion of the North," for the liberties of the German Protestants, against their Imperial and Popish enemies. Though containing soldiers from all parts of Scotland, these regiments were chiefly composed of men from Easter Ross and Sutherland—that is to say, from the district of which Tain was the market town, and, in almost every sense, the capital; and there can be no doubt that many of our young townsmen were among the adventurers. It is not difficult to conceive that this close connection with the great Continental struggle would excite among our ancestors an interest intelligent as well as enthusiastic in the principles involved, and would help to prepare them for the approaching struggle for the like principles at home. We know, in fact, that a number of these soldiers of fortune returned from abroad with something better than honour—with religious life either first found or greatly strengthened through intercourse with fervent Christians in the army of Gustavus. I think it not an insignificant remark that it was in this period, when men's minds were so influenced here, that there was born and brought up in this town a man, Thomas Hog, whom we shall meet

hereafter as one of the best of the Covenanting worthies of Scotland, and certainly the most renowned of them in the North.

We pass over thirty years, crowded with important events in the history of our country, to find our town, in the year 1650, in the very thick of the great national conflict. The celebrated Marquis of Montrose, once a Covenanter, had passed to the Royalist side, and had for some time devoted himself, with high courage and splendid military genius, to reduce Scotland to abject submission to the King. After various vicissitudes, he landed in Orkney with foreign troops in 1650, and having crossed to Caithness with these and also with troops obtained in Orkney, he marched into Sutherland by the Ord, and after resting at Kintradwell, Rhives, Pitfour, and Lairg, crossed the Shin and the Oykel to the Ross-shire side, and then marched down along the Kyle until he reached Carbisdale, near the south end of the present railway bridge. But while he halted for a few days at Carbisdale to await reinforcements from the Royalist clans, intelligence of his movements were carried to Edinburgh, and active preparations were commenced there to send a strong army northwards against him. Meanwhile, Lieutenant-Colonel Strahan hurried in advance with a small troop of horse to Tain. On arriving here, he was joined by about 500 foot, 300 of these under the command of the Earl of Sutherland

(who had thought it prudent, after garrisoning the principal places in his own county, to pass into Ross), the rest under Ross of Balnagown, and Munro of Lumlair. At a council of war it was resolved that the Earl of Sutherland should re-cross the firth, and throw himself into the enemy's rear, both to protect his own county and to prevent Montrose from being joined by men from the farther North; whilst Strahan himself and his five troops of horse, together with the Munros and Rosses, under their respective leaders, should march through Edderton, into Kincardine, on this side of the Firth, to intercept Montrose before he could retire to the hills. On Saturday, the 27th of April, whilst Strahan's officers were deliberating whether to move immediately forward or wait till Monday, in order to avoid the necessity of fighting upon the Lord's Day, he received the intelligence of Montrose's advance from Strath Oykel to Carbisdale. Strahan immediately advanced unobserved to within a few miles of Montrose's encampment, hiding his men amidst the broom, in order to conceal from Montrose's scouts the fewness of his forces. The great Montrose was thoroughly deceived; and, supposing the few horsemen who were seen crossing the hill to be but the first of a large body of cavalry to follow, he fled to the north-west to avoid the expected attack, his foreign troops making for the wood, to which they were followed by the Munros and Rosses, who cut

them down in great numbers. The tumuli which mark where they were buried may, to this day, be seen extending for two miles in that direction, and not many years ago dirks and other weapons, and even silver spoons, were found in turning up the ground. Two hundred of Montrose's troops attempted to cross the Kyle, but, mistaking the ford, were drowned; while four hundred were taken prisoners. The conquerors offered thanks to God in the open field for the victory obtained, and returned to Tain, carrying the prisoners along with them. Montrose himself, after wandering about in disguise for a time in Sutherland, was captured by Macleod of Assynt, who kept him in his Castle of Ardvreck, whence he was removed to Skibo Castle, thence to Brahan, and thence to Edinburgh, where, as we all know, he was, ere long, ignominiously executed. We could have wished, in consideration of his heroism, however mistakenly directed, that his life could have been spared in consistency with the safety of his country. The mob of Edinburgh alone must be held responsible for the circumstances of unfeeling insult that attended his execution. We have the gratification of remembering that on this occasion our ancestors—the men of Easter Ross—fought effectually on what was the side both of Scottish freedom and of religion.

As to the material condition of Easter Ross and Tain about this time, we have some curious details in

one of the few old books of Scottish travels—a book written by Franke, an English gentleman of Cromwell's army, who, in 1657 and '58, travelled from Carlisle by land to Inverness, and thence (apparently by sea) to Dunrobin. In returning, he seems to have crossed the Firth from Sutherland to Ross-shire, and describes what he saw on landing in this strange, affected style.* "Where are we now? On *terra firma*, where should we be? And this is the town of Tayn in Ross, that equaliseth Dornoch for beautiful buildings, and as exemplary as any place for justice; that never use gibbet nor halter to hang a man, but sacks all their malefactors, and so swim them to their death." Drowning was of old the common form of execution of women in Scotland; but, curiously, Franke here says—perhaps mistaking the exact import of what he heard—that in Tain even men were so executed. In another place he launches out in high-flown praise of the abundance and cheapness of provisions in Ross—(that is, Easter Ross). "So replenished," he says, "is Ross with fish, as no part of Scotland can boast of;" and after describing the abundance of other provisions, he concludes, "But what have I to do to discourse a country where eggs are sold for twenty-four a penny, and all other accommodations proportionable; nor ever expect to have it cheaper when we leave these plentiful borders of Ross." He records as a curious local

* "Northern Memoirs, Calculated for the Meridian of Scotland."

belief regarding the soil of Ross (what many of us remember to have heard in youth regarding that of Sutherland), that it had the quality of expelling rats; "and some others," he adds, "as ignorant as themselves, transport the earth of Ross into most parts of Scotland, persuading themselves that if they do but sprinkle it in the fields, it shall force that enormous vermin, the rat, to become an exile." With amusing seriousness, he reasons against the credibility of the belief, saying that, though he never saw a rat here, "as for mice, so great is their plenty that, were they a commodity, Scotland might boast of it; and," argues our philosophical traveller, like a Darwinian born before the time, "mice and rats are cousin-german, as everybody knows that knows anything, and for the most part keep house together; and what difference has happened amongst them here, as to make such a feud that the rats in Ross should relinquish their country, and give possession wholly to the mice, this is a mystery that I understand not." The puzzle was not lessened by the traveller's finding a very different state of matters at Forres, which he declares "is famous for nothing except that infamous vermin, the rat, because so numerous in these parts (of Moray) that a cat can scarcely get a living amongst them. Why," he supposes some one to ask, "don't they send and fetch of the earth from Ross?" and he answers, "That I know not; but this I know, that they snatched the meat off

our trenchers, and churned the stockings and apparel of the soldiers. I have been told that these vermin politicians storm the town once or twice a-year, to the terrifying amazement of all the inhabitants: and that cats durst not be seen abroad."

From the turgid sentences of this pedantic traveller we turn to the burgh records of the period in search of some indubitable facts regarding the town. The oldest extant of these records begins in 1660, the year of the restoration of Charles II., and three years after Franke's visit. Unfortunately, it is much mutilated, in many places quite illegible, and the legible portion of it contains not much that is specially interesting. We learn from it that a burghess was regularly elected to represent the burgh in Parliament, that meetings of Town Council were regularly held for ordinary business, as were burgh courts, at which there was transacted a good deal of legal business—almost as much as there is now at ordinary sheriff courts. The Town Council made some attempts, as unwise as similar ones found in the history of other burghs, to regulate the market price of goods in the town. But we find one interference with free trade which had probably a wiser reason. This was the imposition by the Magistrates of a high tax on bent-grass turf—a tax so high that it was apparently meant to be prohibitory. One cannot help wishing that the tax had been imposed earlier and had proved

more successful ; for before the end of the century, if tradition speaks correctly, the downs of the Morrich-mòr had been so exposed by turf-cutting that the storm of a single night drifted their sand over the Fendom, and destroyed the previously fertile farms belonging to the burgh and other proprietors of the locality.

It was a dismal and yet glorious period for Scotland that had opened with the Restoration—a period of more widespread and longer-continued oppression of conscience, but a period also of more numerous instances of heroic sacrifice of all things worldly and of life itself for conscience sake, than our land has ever witnessed before or since. The old attempt was renewed to force the Church of Scotland into conformity with that of England, against the convictions of the people; and, as is well known, 400 ministers were ejected from their parishes for refusing compliance. Mr Andrew Ross, the minister of Tain, was one of the ejected ; but as he died very soon after, we know less of him than we do of three of his brother ministers within the Synod of Ross who were similarly treated, viz.—Mr Thomas Ross, minister of Kincardine, a remarkably pious man, who suffered imprisonment for years in the tolbooth of Tain, where he was frequently visited by persons from far and near desiring spiritual counsel and help ; Mr M'Killigan, of Alness, a similarly devoted man ; and, most eminent of them all, Mr

Thomas Hog, of Kiltearn. He, as I have already mentioned, was a native of this town. He was a man of the most fervent piety and deepest Christian experience, whose character was not only thoroughly consistent before men, but who, living very near to God, was proportionally blessed in his ministerial labours. When ejected from his parish, he wandered about preaching the Gospel with great success, especially in Morayshire. For an outed minister to do this was then a high crime, and on complaint being made by some of the conforming ministers of the district where he preached, he was intercommuned—that is to say, all men were prohibited, on pain of fine or other punishment, from receiving him into their houses, or furnishing him with the necessaries of life. He was several times imprisoned, and finally banished from Scotland. Holland was at that time the refuge for Scottish exiles; there he resided for several years, and so won the esteem of the Prince of Orange that he, when expecting to be called to the British throne, consulted him on Scottish affairs. At the Revolution, Mr Hog was restored to his parish, to form, with a few surviving brethren, the nucleus of the restored Presbyterian and Evangelical Church of the Northern Highlands. Hardly, however, had he been resettled among his people when the Prince of Orange, who was now King William III. of Great Britain, urged his removal to London as one of his private chaplains; but

health and strength had by this time failed, and his spirit, which his friends had for some time seen to be "transported with the hope of glory," was called away into the presence of his Lord and Saviour before the summons of his earthly King could take effect. The reverence felt for him by his Christian friends found expression after his death in the title of "that great and almost apostolical servant of Christ," and even his most unscrupulous enemies, while diligently seeking to find something wherewith to blacken his memory, "could find no fault in him at all, except as touching the law of his God." It becomes the people of Tain to cherish his memory, as one of the best and greatest men whom this town, or Ross-shire, has produced.

We ask with interest, What were the feelings of the people of Tain during the twenty-eight "black years" of persecution under Charles II. and James VII.? We have only a few data for answering this question. The burgh records of the period are absolutely silent on the subject: but this very silence may be considered expressive; the apparent care that is taken to avoid all allusion to national events, suggesting the idea that the Town Councillors considered it dangerous to write down the thoughts that were in their hearts. We know that Mr. Robert Ross was settled as the Episcopal incumbent in the year 1666, and continued in his office for thirty-four years. Yet, not only has his name absolutely perished out of the oral

traditions of the district (in contrast with the Presbyterian ministers who followed him, whose names and even characters have all been affectionately handed down), but the burgh records during his incumbency are almost equally silent regarding him; the solitary mention of his name being on occasion of a complaint made by him to the Town Council in a dispute he had about peats with the proprietor of Tarlogie, on the merits of which dispute the Town Council gave no opinion, but appointed a committee to try to settle it. Another negative indication of the state of feeling may be found in the following circumstance. Tain received a visit from the Bishop of Ross in the year 1665, and the Town Council presented him with the freedom of the burgh on the occasion. But the meeting of Council at which this was done consisted of a bare quorum, viz., the Provost (who was a neighbouring laird), and two Bailies; whereas, at the immediately preceding and immediately following meetings, there was a full attendance of the members—the marked contrast leading us to suspect that most of them had no desire to meet the Bishop, and that there was little heart in the compliment paid him. Indeed, when we read a letter which was written this very year by Archbishop Sharp to Lord Tarbat, urging, in a characteristically selfish and violent manner, the adoption of more stringent measures against the outed ministers of Ross-shire and their

followers, we conclude that the Bishops and the Government did not obtain cordial support even from the proprietors of Ross-shire. Munro of Foulis and Ross of Balnagown both zealously assisted the outed ministers. In the parish of Tain also, one proprietor at least, M'Culloch of The Plaids, was fined for practical sympathy with them. The opposition offered here to the oppressive measures of the Government did not generally, however, take such an active form as in some parts of the South.

On the re-establishment of Presbyterianism at the Revolution, Mr Robert Ross, the Episcopal incumbent of Tain, professed his willingness to conform to the Presbyterian government of the Church; but the Presbytery of Ross* did not trust him sufficiently to admit him to sit in Presbytery with them. He held his incumbency, however, until 1700, when he was charged by the Presbytery with "errors, gross scandal, and supine negligence," and on his refusal in the circumstances to plead before that court, was summarily deposed. The Magistrates at first joined in a petition to the Privy Council on his behalf, their motive being, probably, one of mere compassion; for when the case was reviewed by a special Commission of the General Assembly, and the Presbytery's sen-

* After the Revolution, when Presbyterian ministers were few in number, a single Presbytery, meeting generally at Tain, had jurisdiction not only over Ross and Cromarty, but for a time also over Sutherland and even Caithness.

tence set aside in form as irregular, but confirmed in substance by the re-deposition of Mr Ross, the very same Magistrates took an active part in prosecuting a call to the young Presbyterian minister of Tarbat, Mr Hugh Munro, to be minister of Tain.

This Mr Munro seems to have been both a good and able man; and the Presbytery evidently attached importance to his translation to Tain, which took place in the year 1700, much to the displeasure of the people of Tarbat, who strenuously resisted the proceedings, taking occasion at the Presbytery to tax the Magistrates of Tain to their face with their recent support of the deposed curate. There is a curious tradition which affirms that the translation had to be carried out by downright physical force. A party from Tain, it is said, went out to Tarbat on the Sabbath day, and, actually taking the minister out of the pulpit, carried him in triumph to Tain, where they placed him in the Regent Moray's pulpit, to preach the sermon he was to have preached in Tarbat. I give the story as I have again and again heard it from intelligent persons.

Now that we have got into the eighteenth century, let me gather a few incidents of various kinds, that may afford us glimpses of Tain and its people. In the year 1703, the steeple of the tolbooth was blown down during a stormy night, "to the great hazard of the lives of the prisoners, and considerable damage to the

contiguous church." On the petition of the Magistrates, pleading the poverty of the town, the Privy Council ordained a collection to be made throughout the country for the reconstruction of the building ; creditors being enjoined meanwhile to transport their prisoners to other jails. The General Assembly accordingly appointed a Sabbath for the collection, and the people of Tain voluntarily assessed themselves for the same purpose. Whether the new tower, which forms one of the most distinguishing features of our town, is after the pattern of its predecessor, we know not. But it is remarkable that there is an old tower, called the Eschenheim Tower, at Frankfort in Germany, so very like it, that one of the two must apparently have been copied from the other.

I have already spoken of the long prevalent belief in witchcraft. For more than 200 years the belief in this superstition was productive of terrible misery to many suspected persons throughout Europe, generally poor old women, who were subjected to the most barbarous treatment, and finally burnt, on evidence that would be ridiculous in its insufficiency, were not the consequences to the wretched creatures so horrible. The Popish Church began these cruelties ; and they were continued for a considerable time even in Protestant countries ; though undoubtedly evangelical principles, thoroughly applied, would have relieved men of those unreasoning fears of the Evil One

86 *How the Presbytery of Tain dealt with Witchcraft.*

which prompted the cruelties. I am happy to be able to show how one evangelical Presbytery, that of Tain, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, dealt with accusations of witchcraft. In 1713, a man in Kincardine became possessed with the idea that a woman there frequently dragged him out of his bed, to hunt him with cats, dogs, and other wild creatures, while at the same time depriving him of the power of speech to make known his sufferings; and he employed three men to administer an oath of purgation to the woman, imprecating all the curses of the Bible upon herself if she used any practices or bore any malice against him. Other persons, who had lost cattle, or other property, laid these evils to the charge of neighbours whom they suspected of malice against them, and of witchcraft; and they forced all these suspected neighbours, by public citation given them on the Lord's Day, to meet together, and take a similar oath of purgation. The Presbytery declared this practice to be a horrid profanation of the Lord's most holy name, an acknowledgment of the Devil in afflictions which should be taken from the Lord's hand, and a cherishing of heathenish superstition;—and entreated all their people, in the fear of the Lord, not only to refrain from such practices, but to bear testimony against them in their several stations. A man in Portmahomack was charged with having, by advice of a woman there, struck a stroke with an axe

on the face of the couple-tree as soon as his father expired, in order to prevent the spreading of the disease in his family. The Presbytery simply advised the session publicly to rebuke the parties. During the reign of James VI., or even of Charles II., the suspected persons would probably have been tortured into confessing themselves to be in league with Satan, and then burnt.

As the people of Tain had shown themselves in the sixteenth century zealous for the Reformation; and in the seventeenth for the freedom of the Church and its government; so now in the eighteenth we find the local feeling decidedly in favour of the Revolution Settlement, and of the Orange and Hanoverian Governments. This feeling drew them into much friendly intercourse with the Protestant, Presbyterian heads of the two clans in the immediate neighbourhood, Ross of Balnagown, and Munro of Foulis, and with the still more powerful Earl of Sutherland. General Ross of Balnagown was chosen Provost of the burgh in the year 1716—Lord Provost he is always styled in the records; and the Magistrates placed his arms upon the steeple; and he, on his side, “complimented the town with 100 stand of arms.” In 1715, the Town Council, considering the rumours of confusion like to happen throughout Britain in consequence of the efforts of the Pretender, ordered the whole inhabitants to take arms, and appointed a nightly guard of ten men and a

captain to watch the town from eight o'clock at night to six in the morning. All men between 60 and 16 years of age were called to rendezvous on the Links, and next day in the High Street, that they might receive orders from the Magistrates, so as to have the town in a posture of defence against any who might attempt to enter it to proclaim the Pretender—"as has most traitorously and rebelliously been done," say the records. The Magistrates at the same time requested the favour of Mr Hugh Munro, minister, to be the bearer of a letter to the Earl of Sutherland, thanking his lordship for his kindly advertisement to the town of the danger, and to assure him of their loyalty. At the same time they despatched 50 sufficient fencible men, under command of Hugh Ross of Tollie, with the best clothes and arms and four days' provisions, to march at once to Alness in order to join Capt. Robert Munro of Foulis, in defence of the present Government; and they sent Captain Munro a loan of as many stands of arms as the town could spare from its own defence. I cannot find that these Tain men were called to engage in any dangerous service; but at least they showed their willingness.

After the suppression of the rebellion of 1715, a number of estates of Jacobite chiefs in the Highlands, being declared forfeited, were placed under commissioners authorised to collect the rents for the Government. As to some of these estates, and especially the

immense territory of the Earl of Seaforth, from Brahan Castle to the island of Lews inclusive, the commissioners were for a long time entirely baffled. The Earl, on his banishment in 1715, had entrusted the management of the estates, no longer legally his, to a faithful retainer, Donald Murchison, ancestor of the celebrated geologist, Sir Roderick Murchison, and for ten years Murchison collected the rents from the tenants, and found means of transmitting them to Lord Seaforth in France. Not until 1720 did the commissioners find two men bold enough to undertake the stewardship of this Seaforth property, as well as of those of Grant of Glenmoriston and Chisholm of Strathglass. The two men both belonged to Tain—William Ross of Easter Fearn, ex-Provost of the burgh, and his brother, Robert Ross, one of the Bailies. These factors, on sending notice to the Seaforth tenants, received for answer that they should never get anything from them but leaden coin ; and so it proved. The two Tain magistrates having set forth in person with 30 soldiers, and with some armed servants of their own, for Kintail, were met in the heights of Strathglass by Murchison with 350 armed men under his command. The ex-Provost, Easter-Fearn, received two wounds from the musquetry of his opponents ; his son, Walter, was mortally wounded ; and Bailie Robert Ross's son was also hurt by a bullet. The two youths were taken prisoners, and young Easter-Fearn died

next morning. The battle was fought bravely on both sides ; but it ended with Easter-Fearn's giving up his papers, and binding himself not to officiate in his stewardship any more, after which he gladly departed homewards with his companions, under an escort of Murchison's men to conduct them safely past a body of Camerons lurking in the rear. We need not withhold our sympathy from either side in this struggle ; we can sympathise with the Kintail men in their fidelity to their chief, while sympathising still more with the men of Easter Ross in their loyalty to the Protestant Government.

In the rebellion of 1745 under the Young Pretender, the burgh of Tain was subjected, say the records, to great distress and oppression for a time from a large body of the rebel army quartering therein, and making arbitrary demands for money under pain of military execution. The Magistrates were forced to make large payments ; but nothing further of special interest seems to have taken place here at that time.

The political feeling of our burgh during last century being, from all these indications, sufficiently clear, we may ask—What was the religious feeling of the population ? We might answer this question from tradition, which has handed down every possible proof that the atmosphere of the place has, for several generations at least preceding ours, been religious after a decidedly evangelical and Puritan type. The

memories of our childhood have preserved the distinct tradition of the personal piety of each one of the ministers of Tain from the Revolution downwards, with anecdotes illustrative of their individual dispositions, and of the popular esteem for them. Even the burgh records furnish historical evidence of this state of religious feeling. On the death of Mr Hugh Munro, in 1744, the Magistrates exerted themselves to the utmost to procure a suitable successor to him in the ministerial charge. They elected Mr Daniel Munro, minister of Auldearn, of whom "they heard a universal good character as a pious, godly, worthy man, which evidently appeared in his most excellent sermons preached in the town last Lord's Day," and they recommended to one another "to address all the legal elders, with the heads of families in the burgh and parish, so as, if possible, to have a call to him unanimous and harmonious, and if any of the burgher inhabitants will give opposition, the Council will look on the same as very unkind and undutiful, and calculat allenarly to retard the settlement, as it is surmised there are base agents of . . . * to make a party for a candidate he is to get up, with a view perhaps to divide, and then to set a non-jurist meeting-house man in this parish, as he has done in his neighbourhood, agreeable enough to his own principles. The Magistrates and Council do there-

* A non-resident heritor, who is named.

fore detest and declare against such principles and practices; and, to guard against the same, do instantly agree to call for the inhabitants to caution them against such intriguing, hurtful designs." They also resolved as a burgh to bear the whole expenses of the translation, so as to "forward a speedy, comfortable settlement, and to prevent the abounding of sin and wickedness in this place, which has already grown to too great a height." The whole minute is drawn up with such evident heart and soul as to produce the impression that the author of it was not merely a staunch Hanoverian and Presbyterian, but an earnest Christian man. At each successive vacancy during the century it is evident that patronage was here practically powerless; that the election was virtually in the hands of the Magistrates and people, who, however, used every effort to obtain the concurrence of the patron, in order to secure the legal standing of the minister; the result being that unbroken succession of true evangelical ministers which I have already mentioned. Many of us know for ourselves how highly privileged the parish was in the end of last century, and the earlier part of this, with the ministry of two men, father and son, in succession, Drs Angus and Charles Mackintosh, whose deep-toned piety, theological attainments, weight of character, and preaching power, made their influence be felt wherever they were known, and made Tain a rallying place for all the eminent ministers and

Christians of the North—a kind of religious centre, as in its earlier history, though after a very different fashion.

The traditions heard in boyhood have made us all very familiar with a sad event which took place early in last century. There is a sandhill in the Fendom with which is connected the tradition of a duel fought between two neighbouring proprietors—Ross of Shandwick and Ross of Achnaclaich, who are said to have quarrelled at the time of a market. Achnaclaich was killed, and Ross of Shandwick, escaping on horseback, expatriated himself in Sweden. Bloodshed, it would appear, was not so lightly thought of then by the judicial authorities as at the time of the previous homicide I have mentioned. The impression this event made on the popular mind is evidenced by the careful preservation and renewal, generation after generation, of the foot-prints of the combatants at the spot where they fought, and of the prints of the hoofs of the fugitive's horse on the moist ground as he galloped over what has ever since been known as "The Duel Hill." What man here does not remember the awe with which, as a boy, he looked on those deep-cut marks, while listening to the story of the duel and of the flight?

The accounts of the Burgh Treasurer (which are happily extant from about 1720) furnish us with some rather curious information. First, as to the town's income. In the year 1733, this was only £757 Scots,

or £63 sterling. It was expended chiefly in salaries to a drummer, a schoolmaster and schoolmistress, a music teacher, a clockmaster, three town-officers, the town clerk, and the treasurer. The Magistrates felt this income, which was derived almost wholly from rents and from customs of goods brought into market, to be too small, complaining frequently of the poverty of the town. About three years after this occurs the first entry of some revenue received from the mussel scalps, amounting to £48 Scots, that is, £4 sterling. The Magistrates evidently saw in this sum, small as it was, a good beginning; they ordered a new hat to Bailie Malcolm, "for his trouble in uplifting the scalp money," and they made special efforts to encourage the Moray fishermen to resort to this Firth for mussels. There is an entry of two bottles of wine drunk by the Council when "met to advise a method to induce the boats in the Moray Firth to come to the mussel scalps;" and another entry of "drink to the Moray fishers on their first coming." Whether the drink had much to do with the matter or not, the revenue from this source rapidly increased: I wish I could say that it was always wisely expended. The increase seems at first to have induced the Council to waste a good deal of money in "treats." For example, there was a "treat" to Captain Tilmore and his soldiers at the time of Alexander Scollar's execution, when six bottles of claret and six of ale were drunk;

another to David Munro, the town's agent, at which nine bottles of claret were drunk ; and there is an entry of a dozen sherry, twenty-two pints of ale, and two glasses—it is not said of what—drunk on occasion of a bonfire, by desire of Calrossie, on receipt of the news of the action of Dettingen ; and so on. Those times were evidently *not* better than the present in so far as official drinking was concerned ; and private townsmen followed the Magistrates' example. For instance, in July 1733, one John Macrae, who was settled in business here, took a strange way of showing his pride in a relative, Governor Macrae, a native of Greenock, who had pleasingly startled the kingdom some years before by a gallant defence which he had made with his ship, the *Cassandra*, against two strongly-armed pirate vessels near Madagascar. John Macrae, accompanied by the Magistrates of Tain and the principal burgesses, went to the Cross, and superintended the drinking of a hogshead of wine, to the healths of the King, Queen, and Royal family, and of Governor Macrae and "his fast friends." From thence the company repaired to the chief taverns in town, where they repeated the said toasts, and spent the evening with "music and entertainments suitable to the occasion."*

In connection with this free use of intoxicating

* *Caledonian Mercury* of the period, as quoted in Chambers' "*Domestic Annals of Scotland*."

drink, which all tradition tells us was in those days far more prevalent among the respectable classes of society than it is now, I may refer to a Gaelic rhyme, which I used to hear in childhood, giving a list of several Tain persons, some of them with very ridiculous nicknames, handed down in it to posterity as

“Na bodaich gòrach,
Slor òl, 's ag iarraidh tuille ;”

that is, “foolish old bodies, ever drinking, and seeking more.”

Several of the Treasurer's entries at this period are of a melancholy character, being expenses connected with executions. I have already quoted one ; a second relates to the execution of John Don, in 1741 ; we find also, in 1762, a sum paid for erecting a new gibbet.

There is a touching tradition connected with this last execution, which was that of a poor servant girl, condemned at the Inverness Circuit Court for child-murder. The popular pity seems to have been strongly moved in her behalf ; and when it was observed that a pigeon flew round the gibbet during the time of the execution, and then lighted on her dead body, the opinion was confirmed that the sentence of death had been unjust. And so, adds the local saying, this was the last execution that ever took place on the Gallow-Hill of Tain.

As far back as we can distinctly trace, education seems to have been well attended to in this town.

After the Reformation, as we have already seen, several chaplainries in St Duthus were conferred on students in the form of bursaries. Early in last century, we find the Magistrates anxiously employed in looking out for a competent burgh schoolmaster to fill the place of one who had retired in consequence of ill health. Still later, we find salaries paid to a schoolmaster, schoolmistress, and a music-teacher. Of the quality of the teaching given in the Grammar School in the latter half of last century, tradition distinctly speaks. Under a teacher of the name of Campbell, it was apparently very high ; and from his school not a few boys were sent forth into the world with classical as well as other attainments that enabled them to shine, and to rise to honourable positions in life. Some of these pupils became afterwards chief promoters of a movement for raising the local education to a still higher point.

In the first year of this century, a meeting of gentlemen connected with the Northern Highlands was held in London, under the presidency of the Earl of Seaforth, to initiate a movement for the erection and endowment of a High School or Academy at Tain. The declared object was to provide "for the youth of the three northern counties a good education, founded on morality and religion, such as might be expected to produce the happiest fruits to themselves, their parents, and connections, and contribute ultimately to

the improvement of the country which gave them birth, and to the general advantage of the kingdom." Tain was fixed on as the seat of the proposed Institution, because the position of the town, on the borders of Ross and Sutherland, adapted it happily to benefit a very large portion of the Highlands, while its quiet and retired situation exempted it from many temptations to which youth were exposed in large cities. The healthiness of the locality, the populousness and fertility of the neighbourhood, and the cheapness of provisions were mentioned as additional recommendations. An influential committee, composed partly of noblemen and proprietors connected with the North, and partly of wealthy London merchants of northern extraction, was accordingly formed for the purpose, and they exerted themselves energetically to raise the necessary funds. Let me name one gentleman, Hugh Rose of Glastullich, himself a native of Tain (of which his father had been minister), and a pupil of its Grammar School, as the most energetic and successful promoter of the scheme. The Institution was opened with great *eclat* in the year 1813, and pupils of the upper and middle classes flocked to it at once, not only from the northern counties, but from other parts of Scotland, and some even from England and the colonies. It became a powerful means of raising the standard of education in the whole North; and it has, during the 70 years of its existence, sent forth a large

number of young men to distinguish themselves in almost every walk of life, and of ladies to adorn and bless many homes.

We are now, then, fairly within the nineteenth century, and close upon our own times—too close to be able to proceed further with ease, for I must avoid even alluding to any persons now living. But I cannot conclude without referring, however briefly, to events in which the political and religious feelings of the generation immediately preceding ours became manifest ; for to ignore these altogether would make the history awkwardly incomplete. With reference to the political feeling of Tain in the days of our own fathers, the earliest recollection of some of us is how conservative that feeling was—how religiously they honoured the King and his Government, and with what dread and dislike they regarded those who were “ given to change.” But when the Reform agitation began—when the prevalent corruption in Parliamentary elections, and the absurdity of the system that gave electoral rights to rotten and even non-existent boroughs, were exposed, the popular conscience here declared itself for reform, and the general feeling in favour of it became decided. My oldest political recollection is the enthusiasm exhibited in the town on the novel occasion of the election of a reforming member for the county.

Some of us recollect equally well how conservative Tain, in our fathers’ days, was in religious and ecclesi-

astical matters too; how deep was the general reverence for things sacred; and how strong the attachment to the National Church. And yet, just because of that veneration for what was most sacred, the popular feeling in the district had again and again dared to resist even the Church in such matters as the forced settlement of ministers who did not commend themselves to the conscience of the people. And we remember how, amid all the hereditary and habitual attachment to Church and State, when the minister of Tain, in 1843, felt himself forced by conscience to abandon the advantages of State Establishment that he might continue free to obey the will of Christ, the people of Tain followed him in an almost unbroken mass—our town in this still representing, as of old, the general feeling of Easter Ross and of the Northern Highlands. On the first Sabbath on which the minister and people met for worship in separation from the State, there was witnessed a sight here which was seen, as far as I am aware, only in one other burgh in Scotland.* The Magistrates of Tain (as if it were a little State by itself) walked in procession, preceded by their red-coated halbert-armed officers, to take their places of honour opposite the pulpit, in the Free Church, as they had been long wont to do in the Church Established. And this they continued to do, Sabbath after Sabbath, until a hint was received from Edinburgh

* Kirkcaldy.

that such an official proceeding was of questionable legality. Thereupon, the Magistrates discontinued the official, while continuing their personal, demonstration of ecclesiastical principle.





CONCLUSION.

IN concluding these fragmentary notices, I cannot refrain from giving utterance to my feeling that few towns so small have as interesting and honourable a history to look back upon as ours. I own I am proud of my native burgh ; and a chief object which I have had in view in the preparation of these lectures has been to strengthen a similar feeling in the rising generation of my fellow townsmen, so as to stimulate them to emulate whatever deserves to be emulated in the actions of our forefathers ; and to do what in them lies, besides, to maintain the character of their native place, and promote its welfare. Long may Tain be distinguished by such a spirit as was manifested by our ancestors at various epochs from the Reformation downwards—a spirit at once conservative of what was good, and willing to reform what was corrupt ; a spirit reverently religious and submissive to rightful authority, yet enlightened to distinguish between true authority and false ; and may an influence for real good thus ever emanate from our ancient town !

May I be permitted to express my earnest wish for her continued and increasing prosperity? She has lost, indeed, peculiar advantages which she once had, and some of these she cannot hope to regain. She cannot hope for any new charter to restore her a monopoly of trade among the towns and villages beside her, nor can she expect or wish that superstition should again draw royal pilgrims to her bounds. She cannot recover the territory of which the encroaching sea has robbed her, nor the natural beauties which the sea-sand on one side and the hand of cultivation on the other have removed. Yet she has important advantages still—a picturesque and healthy situation, a position not unfavourable for provincial trade, a fertile neighbourhood, a good municipal revenue, a beautiful and respectably endowed academy; and, along with these, she has beyond many towns the *prestige* of her past history to inspire her children with enthusiasm in her behalf, and to prompt them to zealous efforts for her good—such enthusiasm as that which has recently restored and beautified her ancient, historic church. But not all of these advantages will insure her prosperity on any other terms than that energetic use be made of them by her own inhabitants. On their personal and collective character, and on their intelligence and enterprise, it must depend whether her railway, for example, will act as an open vein to drain away the life-blood of trade from her streets, or as an

artery in which the pulse of commerce will beat more vigorously than ever. So also of our academy ; it manifestly depends on the character of the instruction and training to be obtained within it, whether the railway will carry our youth away from it to pursue their studies elsewhere, or carry the youth of the respectable ranks of society from other places to be educated here. Do I dream in thinking that by a wise enlargement and modification of its plan to meet the ever-rising educational demands of the age, with such a generous increase of its endowments as is requisite for that end ; and by such intelligent earnest management as is necessary to keep alive the cordiality of public interest in it, it might be made in reality what it was originally designed to be by its energetic founder—the College of the North ? Then, again, in reference to the amenity of our town, it needs only, but it does need, a continued exercise of that good taste and public spirit which our Magistrates, to their honour, have shown in the beautifying and preservation of the now narrowed links and in other improvements ; and it needs the hearty sympathy and generous co-operation of the proprietors and occupants of lands all round the town, to replace the natural beauties we have lost with those which art can bestow ; to give us, if not the old luxuriance of wild nature, at least the varied richness of cultivated fields and trees and hedgerows ; and if not the old freedom with which

in former days the youth of our place used to expatiate when and where they pleased, at least such agreeable combination of open and wooded walks, by sea-shore and winding river-bank, and from high-road across to high-road girdling the town, as would make it very fair to see and pleasant to live in. And, finally, while the faithfulness and even public spirit with which our municipal funds have for a good many years back been managed hardly admit of increase, this very fact encourages the hope that far-seeing wisdom and large-hearted comprehensiveness will characterise all their specific applications ; so that they may be devoted to purposes that will contribute to raise our burgh to a greater height of prosperity, usefulness, and honour than it has ever yet attained.

I cannot conclude without casting a glance into a region of interest higher still. I could not have occupied so much time in the collection and preparation of these materials for the purpose of encouraging a feeling of affectionate enthusiasm in behalf of our native town, had I thought that this was inconsistent with the pursuit of an inconceivably more important end. I have already remarked, that the man who loves his native town may be not the less a lover of his native land ; and not the less, let me now add, may he be a true subject of the kingdom of God and a citizen of heaven. There is a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. No sea of

change will ever waste its territory, or sap its everlasting walls. Its chartered privileges can never be lost ; for they have been purchased with the blood of the Lamb. Its generations shall never be removed by death, nor their memory forgotten in the grave. Its inhabitants say not, " I am sick," for the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity. In the daily routine of life, in the midst of private and public duties, each of us in our station, and not seeking to pass beyond it, we may, through divine grace, be preparing for that everlasting habitation. He who on earth has never passed the bounds of his own loved native town, as well as he who embraces in his sphere of effort the wider interests of his country and of the world, may be living a life of faith, and treading a path that brings him daily nearer God.



APPENDIX.

NOTE I.

WHEN DID TAIN RECEIVE ITS ROYAL
CONSTITUTION?

OUR Burgh has been unfortunate in the loss of charters, infestments, and records ; so that its great antiquity has been doubted, and its privileges questioned and assailed recently to its great injury. It may not be useless therefore to enumerate somewhat particularly the existing proofs of the antiquity of its municipal and royal rights, beginning in the reign of James VI. and ascending in the inverse order of time.

1. King James VI. granted two charters of "Novodamus and Confirmation" to the burgh of Tain, both extant. The latter, in 1612, was given apparently for the purpose of specifying more exactly the property of the burgh ; but I content myself with an appeal to the earlier (10th January, 1587), translating the important preamble at full length :—"James, &c. : We understanding that our burgh of Tayne, lying within our county of Ross and our sheriffdom of Innerness, was by our most noble ancestors of good memory erected and constituted from

ancient time with all and each of the liberties, privileges, courts, markets, and other immunities appertaining to our free royal burghs; and that although the infeftments and charters of these things were by certain savages and rebellious subjects of Ireland (as they are clearly evidenced to us) cruelly consumed by fire, as is contained in authentic testimonies produced before us, nevertheless the provost, bailies, councillors, burgesses, and inhabitants of the said burgh, have in times long past observed and retained their ancient liberty of our free burghs, being enrolled within the rolls of our free burghs, by observing on their part the conventions of our Parliaments, the general conventions of our Estates, the annual conventions of the free burghs of our kingdom, and by paying and sustaining along with the other burgesses of our burghs their share of taxations, and of burdens with the other burgesses of our kingdom: Therefore," &c. Then follow the clauses of renewal and confirmation of all the property, privileges, and power of the burgh and its magistrates, "to be used and exercised as if the infeftments of our said burgh had not been destroyed and burnt."

2. This explicit royal testimony to the immemorial standing of Tain as a royal burgh is legally enough. Yet, observing that in earlier documents it is generally styled a town or immunity, rather than burgh, we have sought for an explanation of this fact. We find it in two considerations:—*first*, that other places, undeniably holding the rank of burghs (*e.g.*, Inverness), were also sometimes called merely towns, even in Acts of Parliament; and *second*, that the distinguishing and outstanding character of Tain, as the ecclesiastical *girth and town of St Duthack*, under which it was so famous before the Reformation, overshadowed its less peculiar, but not therefore less real,

character as a *royal* town or burgh. Nevertheless, we do find it occasionally designated, even in previous reigns, as a "burgh;" its bailies also are mentioned,—and both in private deeds and in official documents its inhabitants are styled burgesses—*e.g.*, in a decree of the Lords Auditors, in 1494, Stephen Raithsone is styled a *burghess* of Thane, while in another decree, dated in the same year, mention is made of "the freedom of the *burgh* of Tain." There are no extant documents in which to look for much older documentary instances of this designation; for the whole charters of the town were burnt in 1427. But

3. The Inquisition of 1439, of which an ancient notarial copy is still extant in Inverness (probably the same that was lodged in answer to the Inverness men's complaints against the people of Tain), testifies not only to the ecclesiastical sanctity of the town, but very explicitly to its privileges as a royal immunity, traced back through Robert III., Robert II., and David II., to its foundation by Malcolm Canmore—a testimony all the more important because of the presence in the jury (among the notables of the country) of several burgesses of Inverness, whom we cannot suppose to have been inclined to exaggerate, or to admit without good evidence, the high royal antiquity of a town of whose privileges they were jealous. Tain is not, indeed, in this document entitled a burgh, but an immunity, probably because its rights as an immunity were alone palpably threatened; but since its privileges as a burgh are attested in the charter of James VI. to have been granted by his ancestors—and that monarch mentions no charter at all except those which had been burnt in the reign of James I., in 1427—we are necessarily driven back to those burnt charters for the foundation and origin which we seek. And there is no reason whatever,

and no manifest cause but historical scepticism, to lead any one to question the truth of the jury's declaration, that the royal privileges of the town, recorded in those lost charters, ascended to the famous Malcolm. For even if he was too illiterate, as some think, to have granted a written charter (though it is difficult to see what literature was requisite for that more than for founding the bishopric of Mortlach in these northern parts, as we know he did), there may, after the fashion of primitive times, have been a solemn and public unwritten act of royal constitution. But that such an act, whether written or unwritten, really took place (as the Inquisition of 1427 states), I not only see no reason to doubt, but its truth is confirmed by such facts as the following, viz. :—

4. In Acts of the Scottish Parliament in which the towns of Ross-shire are named—*e.g.*, in one of James IV., in 1503, as also in another in 1509, which create Ross into a separate sheriffdom, and name Thane and Dingwall as the towns where the sheriff is to hold courts, Thane has precedence of Dingwall (just as, in other Acts, Inverness has of both) ; nor am I aware of any old Act of Parliament in which this order of precedence is reversed. But Dingwall dates its constitution as a royal burgh from Alexander II., in 1227 ; so that the royal constitution of Tain, as I infer, must have been still older. Even this brings us to a time considerably earlier than the earliest of the kings stated in the Inquisition to have *confirmed* the privileges of Tain, and to within a little more than a hundred years after the time of Malcolm Canmore, by whom it states the privileges to have been first granted.


Fifthly, and lastly, The facts brought out in this essay as to the contemporaneousness of Malcolm with the saint whose name our town bears in Gaelic, as to Malcolm's having come to this province for the purpose

of establishing his own authority, and as to the part that had been taken by Munro of Foulis and his followers on Malcolm's side against Macbeth—all, taken together furnish, I think, such an easy and consistent historical explanation of the *origines* of this town, and so unite in pointing to Malcolm's time, as strongly to confirm the finding of the Inquisition.

On the following conjecture no stress is now laid ; but it is thrown out for future inquiry, since, should it prove well founded, it would furnish a curious confirmation both of this Note and of Note II. In Torfæus's "History of the Orkneys," as also in the "Orkneyinga Saga," mention is made several times of a town or market-town (*oppidum*, *emporium*, *kaupstadr*) in Scotland, called Dufeyra or Dufeyras, which was more than once visited by the Norsemen in the first half of the twelfth century, on their way from Orkney to Atholl, but whose exact position their unintelligible and apparently contradictory geographical notices render it very difficult to determine. All that seems certain is, that it was on the southern shore of some sea between Caithness and Aberdeenshire. It has by some been supposed to be Banff, as situated at the mouth of the *Deveron* ; by others to be Burghead, in the parish of *Duffus*, in Moray. But as it is mentioned in apparent connection with *Elkialsbakke* (Oykebank, Strath-oykle, the banks or valley of the river Oykle, and of the Dornoch Firth, between Ross and Sutherland), it may rather be Dufey-Ras, or Dufey-Ros ; that is, Dubhthach, Dutho, or Duffy of Ross—a frequent appellation, as we know, for Tain in ancient times. If so, this not only confirms Dr Reeves's date for St Duthach, but also shows the antiquity of Tain, as a town already belonging, in the first half of the twelfth century, to the kingdom of Scotland.

NOTE II.

WHEN DID ST DUTHACH LIVE? AND
WHAT WAS HE?

R Reeves's quotation, in his edition of the "Life of St Columba," of the important statement from the Irish annals which seems to throw so much new light on the history of St Duthach and of St Duthach's town, is as follows :—A.D. 1065. *Dubhthach Albanach præcipuus confessorius Hiberniæ et Alban in Ardmacha quievit—i.e., "Dubhthach of Albin (Scotland), the chief confessor of Ireland and Albin, died in Armagh, in the year 1065."* See also M'Lauchlan's "Early Ecclesiastical History of Scotland."

The inference that this Scottish Dubhthach of the eleventh century was the same with Duthach of Tain, is based not merely on the identity of the names (every one even slightly acquainted with Gaelic orthography, and with the dialectical varieties of pronunciation, sees that identity at a glance), but on the following additional considerations—viz., 1. On the improbability that there were two Scottish saints of that name in the middle ages, both famous throughout their native land, both having an intimate connection with Ireland and visiting it for religious purposes, and both characterised by the same distinctive appellation of confessor; 2. On the fact noted by Dr Reeves, that the Irish date is alone consistent with the circumstance mentioned even in the Scottish legends respecting Duthach of Tain, "that in early life, moved by

divine grace, he crossed the channel to Ireland, and there learned most accurately the laws and precepts of the Old and New Testaments"—a circumstance, says Dr Reeves, which "would harmonise with Ireland's history in the eleventh century, and even until 1169, but which is hardly consistent with the state of the country circ. 1220;" and 3. On the consideration that the Irish date alone is consistent with the early history of Tain: synchronising exactly with the date assigned to the privileges of our town in our oldest documents, it explains those peculiar privileges; and it accounts for the fact that the name Baile-Dhuthaich, and it alone, has been given by the Gaelic population to our town from immemorial time.

But lest the opinion that used to place St Duthach in the thirteenth century should stand in the way, I observe regarding it, that that opinion is not only founded on very inadequate evidence, but involves self-contradiction, and is inconsistent with other historical facts.

In the first place, the authority for it is utterly inadequate. The only Scottish author who assigns an exact date for St Duthach, placing his death about 1253, is a man who wrote about 400 years later, Camerarius; while Leslie, who wrote in 1578, only says more generally that Duthach was the instructor of St Gilbert, who is known to have held high offices in the Church, as archdeacon of Moray and as bishop of Caithness, from 1203 to 1245. These two authorities are evidently far too late to be trustworthy, especially as there is not a shred of confirmatory evidence of any kind: for St Duthach's name is not found in any way connected with the history of the thirteenth century; neither does it occur in any contemporary record or charter or document whatsoever. This argument has more than negative force; for had a man of such celebrity held a high office in the Church in that

century of charters and records, or even lived in it at all, it is hardly credible that this should have been so. Of his alleged pupil St Gilbert of Dornoch, there are many authentic records; even Robert, bishop of Ross, the assumed predecessor of Duthach, as also his assumed successor, a second (?) Robert, we find in contemporary documents, besides a large number of the contemporary clergy of the two dioceses of Ross and Moray, including Brydin, vicar of Tain; but of the famous Duthach himself not a trace! But, in the second place, it seems hardly possible to harmonise the authorities for the opinion, either with one another or with historical facts. Camerarius tells us that St Duthach, who died, according to him, about 1253 (earlier rather than later), was the intimate and revered friend of King Alexander III., who used to receive the eucharist at his hands. But if so, the saint can hardly have died so early as 1253, for in that year Alexander was only eleven years of age. Yet, on the other hand, it is affirmed that St Gilbert, who was archdeacon of Moray so early as 1203, and who probably therefore was in holy orders considerably earlier, had been St Duthach's pupil—a statement not reconcilable with the former, except by assigning to Duthach a long episcopate, or at least public celebrity as a religious teacher, of upwards of fifty years, occupying at least the whole of the first half of the thirteenth century. But unfortunately for such a theory, contemporary evidence, as we have seen, proves that the name of the bishop of Ross in 1227—in the very middle of the period—was Robert; and that at that time the vicar of Tain was one Brydin: so that Duthach cannot at that date have been either the bishop of Ross or vicar of Tain. Thus between King Alexander, Bishop Robert, the Vicar Brydin, and Bishop Gilbert, St Duthach is tossed backwards and for-

wards in the thirteenth century, until it becomes hard to find room for him within it at all.

But if we simply identify Dubhthach with Duthach, as we have seen there are such strong positive reasons for doing, and at the same time retain Camerarius's date for St Duthach's translation (say 19th June, 1253), the origin of these unhistorical and contradictory statements is so easily explained that we need no longer trouble ourselves to reconcile them. It is easy to see how Camerarius (or his authority) would infer that the date of the saint's translation, for which he may have had documentary evidence, was also *about* the year of his death, which might therefore fall within the first years of the reign of Alexander; how he inferred, further, in forgetfulness of Alexander's extreme youth (and misled possibly by some tradition or record of that king's having in his three months' annual residence in the north come sometimes to St Duthach's shrine), that the saint had been the king's personal friend; while again, since St Duthach was thus made partially contemporary with Bishop Gilbert of Dornoch, and was, moreover, said to have performed a miracle at Dornoch, it was inferred by others that Gilbert must have sat at the holy man's feet (though consistency as to dates would rather make *him* to have sat at St Gilbert's). So easily might the mythic history grow out of a single mistake.

But, though not in the thirteenth century, may he not have been Bishop of Ross, as both Leslie and Camerarius say—or at least a Bishop, as Tulloch and the Aberdeen Breviary indefinitely designate him? Not Bishop of Ross, if the Irish date is correct, for that bishopric was not founded until the twelfth century; besides that, an apparently complete series of the bishops of that diocese from its foundation can be made out from their own

signatures, or from contemporary documents in which they are named—in which series no Duthach is found. Nor yet probably was he a prelatic bishop at all ; for it does not appear that he is so designated in ordinary legal documents. He is generally styled simply “Confessor,” without the “Bishop.” So we find him designated, for example, in a legal document—a charter executed in his own town of Tain on the 16th May, 1486, earlier, therefore, than the earliest of those legendary writings—by Sir Thomas Monelaw, who is there designated *perpetuus vicarius villæ olim confessoris beati Duthaci de Tayne*. This must be assumed to be a specimen of the regular legal style, in the absence of any instances to the contrary ; nor is there reason to regard the designation of bishop as more than a conjecture of the legendary writers, anxious to glorify the saint to the utmost by investing him with the highest ecclesiastical rank.

The title *confessarius* given to Dubhthach Albanach in the Irish annals, seems to be equivalent to *confessor*, by which Duthach is described in Scottish official documents. In the middle ages it was certainly used, like *confessor*, to denote sometimes one who hears confessions, sometimes one who makes confession. The expression “chief confessor of Ireland and Scotland,” conjoined with Duthach’s reputation as a pious man and learned teacher of Christianity, seems to me hardly to admit of any less important interpretation than that given to it in these researches.

NOTE III.


WAS JAMES IV. BORN IN TAIN?

BY a new interpretation of the Royal Treasurer's entry of October 22nd, 1504 (quoted at p. 47), it has been lately maintained that King James IV. was born in St Duthach's Chapel at Tain. The true interpretation of the Treasurer's words seems to me, as it seemed to the late learned and accurate Dr Laing, to be, that ST DUTHACH was born on the site of the chapel afterwards built to commemorate the spot distinguished by that event. And on more general grounds it seems highly improbable that, if the heir to the Scottish throne was born in the far North, when his royal father was in the South, engaged in State affairs, the singular circumstance should have escaped the notice of all historians. Besides, St Duthach's chapel had been many years in ruins at the time of James IV.'s birth;—was he born in the open air, like a gipsy's child, and that in the month of March? It is recorded that intelligence of the birth of a beautiful boy, the heir to the throne, was brought to the king by a lady: natural enough; but if the event took place in Tain, were there no officials in the North to undertake the mission? or did they all allow themselves to be outstripped in speed by a woman? Let who will believe all these improbabilities.

In another part of this work will be found a woodcut of the ruins of "*Sanct Duchois Chapel, quhair he was borne.*"

NOTE IV.

THE MODERN RESTORATION AND ADORNMENT OF ST
DUTHUS CHURCH.

HE architecture of this Church, which is mostly in the decorated English Gothic style, is in accordance with the general character of churches of the fourteenth century, from which it dates. Its windows must always have constituted its chief beauty. During the eighteenth, and the early part of this nineteenth century, when architectural taste had fallen to the lowest point in Scotland, the building suffered mutilation after mutilation, and, being finally left uncared for, sustained every wanton injury at the hands of boys. But when attention was once fairly called to its condition, some of the inhabitants and natives of Tain began to feel the unseemliness of such a state of matters. This was not from any superstitious attribution of sanctity to the building—indeed, in so far as it had been originally Romish, the feeling of evangelical Protestants was the opposite. Yet the traditions of several generations, and the personal recollections of some who had themselves worshipped in it, invested it with very hallowed associations—of a kind analogous to those which one connects with a beloved father's or mother's grave, which it would be felt unnatural to allow to be uncared for, and to be overgrown with noisome weeds. So it is remarkable that when once attention was called by the remarks of strangers to the discreditable condition of the old church and its precincts,

the desire for its preservation and restoration, and the chief effective efforts for these ends, were due mainly to Presbyterian evangelical feeling; natives of the town, some of them resident in it, others living elsewhere, began to care for the place where they themselves, or their fathers, had listened to the pure Gospel of the grace of God, and had drunk in the words of eternal life. The first movement in this direction was made by the late Provost John Macleod, who took the practical step of collecting a sufficient sum to clear out the church and its precincts from the accumulated rubbish of years, and also to restore in the first instance the roof and buttresses of the building, so as to preserve it from further dilapidation. Thereafter the east window, which had suffered more barbarous treatment from adult tastelessness and boyish wantonness than any other part of the church, was restored, after the exact original plan, by Mr A. B. Macqueen Mackintosh, son of Dr Angus Mackintosh, the last and one of the most eminent of the ministers who had ministered within the Church; the other windows were similarly restored by other natives and residents of Tain; the floor was subsequently paved with flagstones; the Regent Murray's oaken pulpit was likewise restored; and finally the restored windows were filled in with stained glass, beautifully designed and executed by the Messrs Ballantyne of Edinburgh (who have kindly enabled me to give the following technically accurate descriptions of them).

The east window is greatly admired for its lofty proportions and rich tracery. There are five main compartments above 15 feet in height, and these are filled with stained glass of elaborately foliated design, showing the pine, rose, lily, pomegranate, and apple, interwoven with appropriate central Scriptural passages. The whole

window glows with beautifully blended colour, wrought in a rich mosaic manner. It shows to most advantage when seen in the morning by the light of an eastern sun. The tracery extends to 25 feet above the sill of the window, and is filled with the same rich glass surrounding a centre-piece of the open Bible. Underneath is inscribed:—"In loving memory of Angus Mackintosh and his son Charles Calder Mackintosh, Ministers of Tain, 1797-1853;" and upon gold mosaic, "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.*" The window is the gift of Mr and Mrs Macqueen Mackintosh of Hardington.

II. The west window is of similarly lofty and graceful proportions; it is subdivided into four main compartments, with tracery above. The design of the stained glass is of an historical character, suggested by the donor, Mr George Macleod, by whom the stonework had been previously restored; and may best be described by the inscription of the window, as follows:—"This Church was first used for the Reformed Worship when the Scottish Parliament of 1560 adopted the Confession of Faith drawn up by John Knox and his associates—Robert More Munro, 17th Baron of Fowlis, and Nicholas Ross, Provost of Tain, and Abbot of Fearn, being the members present from Ross-shire. The building continued to be used as the Parish Church until 1815, and was afterwards left unprotected and ruinous for upwards of forty years, when its restoration by public subscription was undertaken and conducted until 1877 by John Macleod, Provost of Tain. In continuation of his efforts and to his memory this window has been placed by his son George Macleod. 1882." John Knox and the Reformers are seen confronting the nobles and prelates of the Scottish Parliament. The varied costumes, with characteristic heads, quaint interior, &c., form altogether a most effective and interesting historical work, in which

the religious and civil, the national and local, are happily combined.

III. Next the south door is the window "*Erected by Hugh Law Rose, Esq. of Tarlogie, and his relatives, 1877.*" There are three of the earlier scriptural subjects from the life of Christ—the Angels' Announcement to the Shepherds, the Nativity, and the Presentation. The donor of this window is a great-grandson of one of the ministers of Tain.

IV. In the centre of south side is the window restored by the late Sheriff Taylor, and filled in with stained glass by friends desirous to commemorate his public and private worth. There are four compartments, containing together the subject from Acts xiii. 12, representing Sergius Paulus earnestly listening to the discourse of Paul, the dawning light of Faith seen on his countenance. The window is thus inscribed—"*To the honoured memory of Harry Munro Taylor, Sheriff Substitute of Ross, Cromarty, and Sutherland. Born at Tain, 2nd February, 1811; died at Tain, 9th December, 1876. He did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God.*"

V. The remaining window upon the south side was restored by the late Kenneth Murray, Esq. of Geanies, Provost of Tain, and has been filled in with stained glass to his memory, and to that of other members of the Murray family intimately connected with Tain. The window is composed of three compartments arching into small trefoil and quatrefoil tracery. The design is historical, and shows King Malcolm Canmore with his devout Queen Margaret conferring Royal Charter on the ancient dignitaries and inhabitants of Tain; St Duthach (represented with book and pastoral staff, as in the Burgh Arms) being shown in the left compartment, near the King. The inscription is—



"In memory of William Murray of Westfield and Rosemount, Provost of Tain, died 1836; William Murray of Geanies, elder son, died 1837; George Murray of Rosemount, younger son, Provost of Tain, died 1848; William Hugh Murray of Geanies, grandson, Provost of Tain, died 1867; Kenneth Murray of Geanies, grandson, Provost of Tain, died 1876"

VI. Upon the north side of the Church are three separate small windows, one of which has been filled in with an illustration of the Parable of the Talents, and is inscribed—"Katherine and William Clark, born in Tain, died in Canada. Erected by their brothers Angus and James Clark, Toronto."

These restorations and adornments have all been executed on an understanding with the heritors of the parish—many of them, indeed, on the faith of an express resolution formally passed by the heritors—to the effect that the building should be devoted, in time coming, to monumental purposes, with the view of making it (I quote the expression used by the promoters of the object) "the Valhalla of Ross-shire." A brass tablet below the west window records this destination. Several private monuments had already existed within the Church, and a happy commencement of its employment for more public and truly historic monumental purposes has been made by the recent erection in it, by public subscription, of a double monument, in memory of Patrick Hamilton, the Martyr Abbot of Fearn, and of Thomas Hog, the covenanting minister of Kiltearn, one of Tain's most honoured sons. It is placed just beneath the east window, and beautifully completes that end of the Church. The design is Gothic of the sixteenth century; the length is 16 feet, and the height $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet. At the sides the pilasters are ornamented with Gothic panels; beside the pilasters are octagon columns

with capitals of natural foliage. The top is finished with cusping in crochets. The base is hung into the wall, and is supported by three corbels. The design was furnished by Mr T. W. Small, architect, Edinburgh, and the work executed and the monument erected by Mr Robert Thomson, sculptor, Edinburgh. In the left panel, carved in a large white marble slab, is the following :—“ *Patrick Hamilton, the youthful Abbot of the Monastery of Fearn, near Tain: of noble extraction, and allied to Royalty, learned and full of faith, he was the first preacher of the Reformation in Scotland, and the first to seal its doctrine by a martyr's death, being burned at the stake in St Andrews, 28th February, 1528. 'His reek,' it was said, 'infected as many as it did blow upon.' His principles quickly spread over Scotland, their influence was felt in the neighbourhood of his Monastery, and was early and decidedly manifested within these walls, where this tablet is erected to his memory.*” In the right panel, on a similar slab, is the following :—“ *Thomas Hog, that great and almost apostolical servant of Christ, was born at Tain, A.D. 1628; became minister of Kiltearn in 1658; was ejected thence for loyalty to Christ's Crown and Covenant in 1662: wandering, intercommuned, imprisoned, exiled, he ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ—by his holy life and doctrine winning many souls for his Lord. In exile he won the friendship of King William III., then Prince of Orange, who consulted him on Scottish affairs. Restored to his parish in 1690, he died there in 1692. This tablet is erected to his memory within the walls where in youth he worshipped.*”

Altogether, St Duthus Church may be regarded as a most interesting and now very beautiful historical building.



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